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New York

President:	Mrs. Cordova Soria	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Yao Shaojun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2018/912)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2018/912)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with article 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Mamabolo is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Johannesburg.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/912, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mamabolo.

Mr. Mamabolo: It is an honour for me to update the Security Council once again on the situation in Darfur and the work of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), in particular the mission's reconfiguration and drawdown process. Detailed information on those issues is contained in the Secretary-General's report on UNAMID (S/2018/912) published on 12 October, which covers the period 11 June to 8 October.

With the adoption of resolution 2429 (2018), on 13 July, we embarked in earnest on the mission's reconfiguration and drawdown. In accordance with the joint special report of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission and the Secretary-General (S/2018/530), we are in the process of relocating the mission's headquarters from El Fasher to Zalingei, and the Joint Special Representative to Khartoum. The mission, together with the United Nations country team in the Sudan, is in the process of finalizing the concept of state liaison functions, which will facilitate collaboration for the duration of the mission's transition and eventual exit.

The mission is on course to reduce the military component by 3,265 personnel by December and another 1,420 personnel by 30 June 2019. The police component will remain at an overall strength of 2,500 personnel. The military component will continue to maintain its presence in the redefined areas of responsibility in the greater Jebel Marra area, while focusing on traditional peacekeeping functions and maintaining the flexibility to respond in the rest of Darfur when the situation demands it. Concomitant with the reduction in the military component, the abolishment of 1,184 civilian personnel positions by 30 June 2019 is being finalized. That total comprises 189 international, 935 national and 60 United Nations Volunteer positions. If approved by the budgetary board bodies, the proposed abolishment will be undertaken in three phases, with 385 positions to be abolished by 31 December, 89 by 31 March 2019 and 710 by the end of June 2019. Commensurate with troop and staff reductions, five teams are proposed for closure in October — three in November and two in December — and three sector headquarters — in Nyala, El Daein and El Geneina — by 30 June 2019. We continue to monitor the impact on the security and protection of civilians in areas from which UNAMID has withdrawn. So far, we have not witnessed any adverse impact.

As required by the mission's two-pronged approach to its operations, UNAMID and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have engaged the Government of the Sudan in the finalization of the transition concept for areas outside the greater Jebel Marra area. It is based on holistic United Nations system collaboration through joint analysis, planning and delivery, with the aim of achieving stabilization in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. As Council members may recall, as described in the joint special report of the Secretary-General and AU Commission Chairperson, the concept envisages that common United Nations system state liaison offices will be established in the capitals of North Darfur, South Darfur, East Darfur and West Darfur.

Accordingly, UNAMID and the United Nations country team have agreed on elements of a concept of State liaison functions that envisages the joint delivery

of programmes to build on the efforts undertaken by UNAMID over the years. The State liaison functions concept provides a common understanding between UNAMID and the United Nations country team on the way ahead during the two-year transitional period.

Our gathering today will also be considering realistic and achievable exit benchmarks, in accordance with the redefined priorities of UNAMID, for the protection of civilians; monitoring and reporting human rights and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance; mediation of intercommunal conflict and other local conflicts; as well as measures to address root causes and mediation between the Government of the Sudan and non-signatory movements.

Council members will have noticed that details of these well-defined benchmarks and the progress made towards the achievement of the strategic priorities of UNAMID are provided in the report of the Secretary-General on UNAMID of 12 October. It is noteworthy that the new set of indicators for these proposed benchmarks reflect the positive changes in the security situation in Darfur in particular and the Sudan in general. The indicators are not only realistic and measurable time-wise, but they are also centred on the Government of the Sudan, as ultimately the Government is responsible for the provision of basic services to its citizenry in Darfur.

I am pleased to report, as indicated in the reports of the Secretary-General in recent months, that the current situation in Darfur remains relatively calm and peaceful, with the exception of pockets in the Jebel Marra area where armed conflict between Government and rebel forces continue. In addition, a low level of intercommunal clashes has been reported. However, despite all this progress, UNAMID has recorded an increase in tensions between herders and farmers — mainly internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees — over land and resources.

The Council may also take note that, for the first time, the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) also declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire from 20 September to 18 December to allow unhindered humanitarian access to areas affected by landslides in Jebel Marra. However, on 20 and 21 September, the Sudanese Armed Forces reportedly attacked SLA/AW positions in Saboon el Fag, Gur Lumbung, Kuilla and Amra, all located in the area north-east of the Kass team site in South Darfur. Three SLA/AW members were reportedly killed.

Between 12 and 14 October, infighting broke out between two factions of SLA/AW in two villages located some two kilometres east and north-east of the Golo temporary operating base over differences relating to participation in the signing of a peace agreement with the Government of the Sudan. The infighting resulted in eight deaths and the situation in both villages remains tense. I wish to put on record that during the recent mudslide disaster in the Tagulei area of Jebel Marra, UNAMID and the United Nations country team joined forces to deliver humanitarian aid and received the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan and of the SLA/AW elements in the areas under their control.

I must note, however, that despite the improved security situation there is continuing concern among IDPs regarding systematic attacks, assaults, farm destruction, harassment, land occupation issues and livestock theft. During this period, six intercommunal clashes over land and livestock theft, resulting in 18 fatalities, were reported. UNAMID continues to focus on early warning, preventive measures, capacity-building and efforts to address the root causes of the conflicts, in collaboration with Government authorities, the United Nations country team, community leaders and relevant institutions.

Humanitarian partners continue to provide assistance to people in need across the five States of Darfur, despite limited resources. There were challenges in accessing some areas in Jebel Marra localities in South and Central Darfur due to ongoing armed clashes and the rains, which have rendered some roads impassable, resulting in civilian displacement and the destruction of homes and assets in West, South and Central Darfur. Details of the numbers of vulnerable people who received assistance, those who were displaced during the reporting period and those who were verified and registered are contained in the special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations (S/2018/530).

Human rights concerns will continue to be an important benchmark that the Government of the Sudan, UNAMID, the United Nations country team and the international community must seriously address. During the reporting period, there was a decrease in the number of new cases of human rights

violations and abuses, with UNAMID documenting 134 new cases involving 304 victims, as compared to 169 cases involving 508 victims during the period from 16 February to 10 June. These violations were largely assaults, killings, criminal activities, abductions and sexual and gender-based violence, thereby creating a hostile environment in and around IDP camps. Our focus should be on building the capacity of the Government of the Sudan to deal squarely with these challenges and to discharge its primary responsibility to protect civilians and IDPs, provide security and address the lack of confidence in reporting cases to authorities and the lack of adequate law enforcement authorities, as well as the inability to provide basic social services.

UNAMID continues to work with the Government of the Sudan in building capacity for members of the criminal justice chain to ensure the effective discharge of their duties. I wish to inform the Council that preparations are under way to start a constructive discussion with the Government of the Sudan on the need to establish a country office of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights in the Sudan, as called for by resolution 2429 (2018).

The implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur continues, albeit at a slow pace due to being undermined by capacity- and resource-related constraints. A board meeting of the Darfur Internal Dialogue and Consultation project was held in Khartoum on 13 August, at which it was decided to extend the project until 31 December. The meeting noted that funding and the ongoing UNAMID reconfiguration are major challenges to the process.

On 23 September, I met with the Commissioners of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur Commissions in Khartoum and discussed the way forward towards the full implementation of the Doha Document. The Commissioners agreed that there was a need to explore other funding opportunities and ways of bringing more donors on board. That meeting was a follow-up to the recommendations of the 13th meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission, held on 11 July in Doha.

In my capacity as Joint Chief Mediator, I have continued to engage with the Government of the Sudan and the non-signatory movements, the SLA-Minni Minawi and the Gibril Ibrahim faction of the Justice and Equality Movement in support of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to bridge their differences so that they can agree on and sign a prenegotiation framework that would facilitate the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement and the resumption of political negotiations based on the AUHIP road map. Engagements with the non-signatory movements is continuing. I continue to appeal to the movements and the Government to engage in earnest in the finalization of the negotiations. I shall continue, in collaboration with the AUHIP and the Government of Qatar, to exert pressure that, I hope, will lead to the successful conclusion of the road map. We have received extensive support from the German Government, the Berghof Foundation and the United States and British Governments.

I recently briefed the African Union Peace and Security Council on 19 September and announced that all efforts to bring the leader of the Sudan Liberation Army, Abdul Wahid Nour, into the peace process have failed so far. I urge the Council to consider stern action against the SLA leader because, by all accounts, he prefers belligerence and armed struggle to the cessation of hostilities and a political process. It is highly unlikely that he will change that position any time soon. The Security Council may wish to consider what actions to take against the SLA leader.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Mamabolo for his briefing today.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We thank Joint Special Representative Mamabolo for his comprehensive briefing.

We are pleased to note that the security situation in Darfur continues to improve. With intercommunal conflict remaining low and criminality decreasing, we commend the efforts of the Government, as well as the concerted engagement of State authorities, local leaders and security elements. That is a testament to the decision of the Security Council in laying down the conditions for African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) to exit the Sudan, based on the transition concept outlined in the special report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General on the UNAMID (S/2018/530). The situation in Darfur can no longer be characterized as an armed conflict between Government forces and non-State actors. The problem now is a lack of development, compounded by a protracted humanitarian crisis and human rights violations.

The Government of the Sudan is making significant efforts to find durable solutions to alleviate the suffering of the people of Darfur. It is working to fill the void that could be created by the closure of UNMAID's team sites, by putting in place institutions to provide for law enforcement and the rule of law. The weapons collection campaign, for example, has considerably mitigated intercommunal violence. However, it is clear that its efforts have been constrained by a lack of capacity and resources. The Government requires substantial assistance from the international community. So far that has hardly been forthcoming.

It is in that context that we commended the decision of the Deputy Secretary-General and the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security to hold a high-level event , on the sidelines of the General Assembly's general debate, on the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and development in Darfur. The meeting successfully underlined the critical need to fund the transition in Darfur and support the whole-of-system approach. We trust that the proposed pledging conference, providing donors with the opportunity to commit financial support, will be held soon.

That is of particular importance. The impressive gains made in Darfur can be ensured only through sustained financing to the development efforts of the Government, as well as by appropriate funding arrangements to enable and enhance the work of the agencies and programmes of the United Nations country team. The international community has invested too much in Darfur, and it cannot risk failure due to a lack of resources. Investment in recovery and peacebuilding efforts in Darfur remains necessary to avert the possibility of a relapse into conflict, and that remains a prospect while significant progress in the security situation is not accompanied by progress in the political process.

The Darfur rebel groups show no meaningful interest in ensuring peace in Darfur. They are amassing huge benefits from criminal activities in neighbouring States and have no real incentive to pursue peace. It is time, we believe, to make a paradigm shift in the approach to the political peace process in the Sudan and apply real pressure on those groups. They should not be allowed to benefit from their illegal activities in neighbouring States, using the Darfur peace process as a pretext. If they continue in their refusal to participate meaningfully in the peace process, the Council should treat them as transnational organized criminal groups, not as Darfur rebels.

In that context, we commend the African Union Peace and Security Council for its decision to seriously consider taking appropriate action against those who continue to obstruct efforts towards lasting peace and security in Darfur. We urge the armed groups to join the peace process before the expiration of the set deadline. We sincerely hope that the Peace and Security Council will immediately institute strict measures against those groups that fail to heed its call for peace.

The activities of Abdul Wahid and his groups in Jebel Marra are already taking a toll on civilians. The Peace and Security Council has called on Abdul Wahid to cease and desist from engaging in deadly clashes, which continue to cause unnecessary deaths and displace civilians. It has asked the Security Council and the international community at large to follow suit. Abdul Wahid has publicly admitted that he has no interest in any peace process. There can be no reason for the Security Council not to act against such openly belligerent behaviour. Mr. Wahid should face the consequences of his damaging and destructive role. We look forward to receiving the statement of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan and of possible options in that regard.

We have no doubt that the overall improvements in the situation in Darfur, which have led to the significant drawdown of UNAMID and the plans for its eventual exit in 2020, also allows for major changes in the Sudan sanctions regime. The Security Council has already agreed to review the sanctions regime in the light of the positive developments that have occurred. We hope that action will be taken in that direction sooner than later, and we are ready to engage constructively in that, which, we believe, is particularly important both because of the significant improvement on the ground and because of the Government's decisive role in dealing with peace and security. That has included fighting terrorism, combating human trafficking and illicit migration and facilitating humanitarian relief. The Sudan's role in reaching a breakthrough in the South Sudan peace process has been enormous. The Government's cooperation with the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan and its Panel of Experts on the Sudan, as well as the wider United Nations system, has also remained consistent.

The need to lift the arms embargo imposed against the Government of the Sudan is urgent. The main rationale for the imposition of the arms embargo no longer exists, and the Government of the Sudan needs to better secure and control its boundaries. Porous borders pose a real threat to regional peace and security. Border security requires effective military deployment, as well as the free movement of troops and military equipment. It is time to provide the Sudan with the means necessary to protect its borders and security.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express my condolences to our brothers in the Republic of the Sudan following the death of former President Field Marshal Abdel Rahman Swar Al-Dahab. May God rest his soul in peace.

I would also like to thank the Joint Special Representative for Darfur, Mr. Mamabolo, for his valuable briefing on the work of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

In our discursion today, I will address four topics: the security situation in Darfur, internally displaced persons, the UNAMID exit strategy, and its review and indicators.

First, on the security situation, we take note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/912), which highlights an improvement in the security situation across most areas in Darfur and a reduction in criminal acts. Undoubtedly, that is a positive sign that we should build upon in order to achieve full security and stability in Darfur. We underscore the need to support the efforts of the Sudanese Government to extend its sovereignty across all national territories and to shoulder its primary responsibility to protect civilians. We welcome the unity of the Council in adopting resolution 2429 (2018), which contributed to reducing the military component of UNAMID. That is evidence of the continued stability in Darfur and a reduced need for United Nations military forces in the region.

Secondly, I would like to touch on internally displaced persons. The fight against rebel factions in Jebel Marra has had an impact on the displacement of some inhabitants of Darfur, as have flooding and heavy rainfall, according to the Secretary-General's report. It is therefore important to recognize two things when discussing displaced persons and their numbers. Displacement is not due entirely to the deep-rooted causes of the conflict; Darfur has seen the return of displaced persons and a new wave of displacement. On the whole, when compared to the figures from last year and previous years, it can be said that the number of displaced persons continues to fall. According to the report, displaced persons are concerned by several factors, including the presence of armed groups in camps. That is why it is important to continue the weapons-collection campaign in the Sudan.

Thirdly, on the exit strategy of UNAMID, resolution 2429 (2018) had a substantial impact in encouraging the Sudanese Government to further cooperate with all parties in order to complete the strategy by 2020. At the meeting of the Arab Ministerial Council held in Cairo in September, the League of Arab States welcomed the resolution, as well as the Sudan's efforts in implementing the objectives of that resolution. We also take note of the annex and the proposed indicators in the Secretary-General's report, which are in line with the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. We note that the Implementation Follow-Up Commission is continuing to work towards the implementation of the Doha Document.

Fourthly, on the exit strategy and its indicators, as we stated at the Council's meeting on UNAMID in March (see S/PV.8202), UNAMID's mandate and the Secretary-General's reports are related to Darfur. Therefore, the indicators should not be applied beyond Darfur to the entire Sudanese territory. As the Special Envoy of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the brotherly State of Qatar underscored in July, following the thirteenth meeting of the Implementation Follow-Up Commission — which included members of the Council — 85 per cent of the provisions of the Doha Document have been implemented. The indicators should therefore focus on the points that have not yet been implemented.

The Sudan sorely needs the support of donors, which must honour their commitments. I commend the efforts of the joint mechanism between the Sudan and the League of Arab States pertaining to the follow-up and implemention of Arab development projects in Darfur. A donor conference should be organized to support the Sudan and help it to move from the peacekeeping phase to that of building peace.

In conclusion, it is time for the Council to strengthen its support for the Sudan as it seeks to focus on political solutions to achieve peace in the country and neighbouring countries. The Sudan must be supported

so that security and stability on its territories and in the wider region can be achieved.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor since the Plurinational State of Bolivia assumed the presidency of the Council, allow me to sincerely congratulate you, Madam, on the dynamic activity and important programme of work of the Council throughout the month of October, particularly its visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also like to commend and express gratitude for the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/912) that was introduced to us by Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). His briefing fully illustrated the current situation in the Darfur region.

The briefing that we have just heard highlights a relative improvement in the general security situation in Darfur, where there were no significant clashes between the Government forces and the armed groups during the period covered by the report, which is worthy of note. However, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is concerned about the humanitarian situation in the region, which remains precarious. While we commend the Sudanese Government for providing an environment conducive to a continued improvement in the situation in Darfur, we urge it to keep working in that respect, as it did in deciding to unilaterally extend the ceasefire until 31 December. In that regard, Equatorial Guinea lends its full support to the Sudanese Government in seeking a definitive solution to bring irreversible peace to Darfur.

In order to achieve that goal, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea believes that in the current phase, the United Nations, the African Union, the international community and the donor countries should lend greater support to the Government of the Sudan and UNAMID so that they can together address the root causes of the crisis, which continue to cause isolated acts of violence over land disputes, such as intercommunal attacks, which require mediation and reconciliation efforts in order to prevent and put an end to those conflicts.

The other aspect is the overriding need to support the Government of the Sudan in its weapons-collection campaign. The full implementation of that programme is necessary not only to improve the relative calm that prevails in Darfur, but also with a view to restoring definitive peace in the region, particularly since that important programme is now being carried out in the Jebel Marra area.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea urges the Government of the Sudan to ensure that, just as we have seen in the security situation, improvements also be achieved in the political situation through the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur to reach a total ceasefire. In that regard, support must be lent to the political process being carried out by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel.

To that end and to show the Council how it can support efforts to break the deadlock in the negotiations between the Government and the rebel movements in Darfur with regard to the implementation of Doha Document for Peace, which was adopted in 2011, we believe that it is necessary to invite the Chair of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, former President Thabo Mbeki, to brief the Council about the efforts being undertaken to that end. The last time President Mbeki delivered a briefing to the Council was on the 12 January 2017, almost two years ago.

My delegation warmly congratulates the Government of the Sudan, Joint Special Representative Mamabolo and all UNAMID personnel for the commendable work they are doing. We encourage them to continue in their intercommunal and governmental mediation efforts to improve the lives of the people of Darfur, so that the precarious and relative peace and tranquillity in the region at the moment become sustainable peace throughout the Darfur region.

I conclude by expressing our resolute support for the recommendation made by Mr. Mamabolo for the Council to consider taking action against recalcitrant groups of rebels and armed groups that do not yield to reason and come to the negotiating table, by adopting sanctions as was done is the case of the leader Abdul Wahid.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We join others in expressing our deep appreciation to Joint Special Representative for Darfur Mamabolo for his comprehensive briefing on the quarterly report of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) (S/2018/912).

Like previous speakers, we are encouraged by the continuing improvement in the security situation in Darfur, as well as the overall reduction

in intercommunal clashes, criminal activities and human rights incidents. The ongoing arms-collection campaign and the deployment of Government security forces have contributed to improved security conditions and consolidated the Government's authority in Darfur. Kazakhstan welcomes Khartoum's commitment to enhance the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and the delisting of Government forces from the annex to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict. We believe that Khartoum has demonstrated its political will to sustainably address the challenges in the region. We therefore support the need to review the sanctions regime as well.

However, we are concerned by the insufficient progress in the peace process. My delegation underscores the need for a permanent ceasefire agreement to create an environment conducive to the resumption of peace talks and reinvigorate the outstanding provisions of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. We call on all parties in Darfur to meaningfully participate in an inclusive political process led by the African Union (AU) High-level Implementation Panel and supported by Joint Special Representative Mamabolo.

Another issue of concern is the ongoing clashes in the Jebel Marra area, which have a negative impact on the humanitarian situation in Darfur. We believe that the Security Council should consider appropriate measures to increase the pressure on those who refuse to cease hostilities and continue to obstruct efforts towards lasting peace.

Other areas that need attention include food insecurity in Darfur and the large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) with insufficient access to basic economic and social services. There is certainly a need for a paradigm shift in our approach by transitioning to peacebuilding efforts. All measures should be taken to address the root causes of the conflict, including the provision of basic services in remote areas and finding durable solutions for IDPs by implementing the UNAMID-United Nations country team's integrated strategic framework for Darfur for the period from 2017 to 2019. The success of our actions will require better coordination among all United Nations entities, as well as greater and sustainable financial support to the Government of the Sudan by the United Nations system and donors.

In turn, the Government's continued cooperation with the United Nations and the AU and increased efforts on its part to improve the effectiveness of land management, provide access to basic services and ensure the right of return and property restitution, as well as increase the presence of police and the rule of law, are also crucial. Genuinely including women in decision-making and providing education for children and employment for youth are also important for enduring stability.

With regard to implementing UNAMID's reconfiguration, we welcome the finalization of a new mission concept aimed at preventing a relapse and preparing for the mission's exit in 2020. We therefore look forward to the conclusion of integrated planning to implement the envisaged reconfiguration. We once again underscore that the success of that concept will require greater investment by the United Nations system, while delivering as one United Nations. We therefore note the importance of a resource mobilization strategy that ensures long-term financial support for sustaining peace in Darfur.

Finally, we thank Joint Special Representative Mamabolo, UNAMID personnel, Special Envoy Haysom, the AU High-level Implementation Panel and others for their tireless efforts towards achieving peace and stability in Darfur.

Mr. Ipo (Côte D'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Côte D'Ivoire would like to thank the Bolivian presidency for organizing this Security Council briefing to review the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/912) on the evolving situation in Darfur and the implementation of the mandate of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). We also thank Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of UNAMID, for the quality of his briefing.

Having read the report, my delegation has some observations concerning the political and security situation, humanitarian and human rights issues and UNAMID operational environment.

With regard to the political and security situation, my delegation commends the progressive stability in the region of Darfur. However, we remain concerned about the impasse facing the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, which is the cornerstone of the peace process. Côte D'Ivoire is convinced that there is no alternative to a political settlement to the crisis in Darfur. We therefore expresses our firm support for the political process to resolve the current

crisis. We call upon all stakeholders, including the non-signatory movements, to persevere in constructive dialogue to definitively achieve the peace that the peoples of Darfur have aspired to for so many years. My country also calls upon the Sudanese authorities to work towards developing consensus-based norms that guarantee the transparency and credibility of the elections planned for 2020.

On the security front, my delegation commends the efforts undertaken by the Sudanese authorities to reduce the level of violence and ensure security in Darfur. However, we are worried by the sporadic clashes in the Jebel Marra region, the intercommunal conflicts, the growing tensions between herders and farmers and militia attacks against civilians. We therefore call upon the warring parties to immediately cease hostilities. My delegation also calls on development partners to provide multifaceted support to the Sudanese authorities in the pursuit of solutions to the root causes of the conflict.

With regard to the humanitarian and human rights situation, my delegation notes with concern the ongoing food insecurity, which is exacerbated by the economic crisis and climate hazards, as well as violent clashes that have led to the destruction of houses and the mass exodus of the civilian population. Moreover, the climate of insecurity and heavy rains in some parts of Jebel Marra have made it difficult to access areas where there are substantial humanitarian needs. My delegation is also worried by attacks against civilians, including sexual violence in Darfur. Côte d'Ivoire invites the international community to redouble its efforts to provide appropriate responses to the deteriorating humanitarian situation and human rights violations. In that respect, my country asks that total access to all conflict-affected parts of Darfur be granted to United Nations agencies. We also invite stakeholders to work, in close collaboration with United Nations entities and humanitarian actors, to provide appropriate assistance to distressed populations.

My country encourages the Sudanese Government, in collaboration with all actors, to create the conditions for the return of displaced persons and refugees in safety and with dignity and for their resettlement and reintegration. To that end, Côte d'Ivoire urges the international community to support the Sudanese authorities through a substantial contribution to financing the 2018 humanitarian response plan for the Sudan.

Concerning the operating environment for UNAMID, Côte d'Ivoire congratulates UNAMID on the work that is has done in often difficult conditions, which is characterized by a surge in acts of violence against its personnel. The presence of UNAMID in Darfur is needed for the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as for peacebuilding and development in the Sudan. It is therefore essential that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur be able to operate in an appropriate environment.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire calls on the international community to provide the financial and technical assistance necessary for the establishment of strong institutions that are able to overcome the challenges related to establishing the rule of law, justice and security in Darfur.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank the Bolivian presidency for convening this meeting and Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative for Darfur and Head of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), for his important briefing.

Peru appreciates the recent improvement in security in Darfur and hopes that it can be extended across the whole territory, including the Jebel Marra area, where clashes are still arising between Government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid. We also underscore the need to put an end to intercommunal conflicts and clashes over land and natural resources, which discourage the return of internally displaced persons to their places of origin.

We reiterate that only a political agreement will allow the establishment of sustainable peace and, in that regard, we regret the fact that, despite the negotiations under way and the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, there is still no agreement with the non-signatory armed groups of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. We deem it necessary that the African Union Peace and Security Council must adopt strict measures against groups that do not join the peace process by December, as laid out in their communiqué 19 September. That topic should also be considered by the Council, as Mr. Mamabolo indicated.

We trust that the new UNAMID mandate and close cooperation with the United Nations country team will allow the root causes of the conflict to be addressed more effectively, among other important factors, thereby contributing to the development of the

institutional environment required to peacefully settle land ownership disputes.

We highlight the need for the donor community to contribute during the transition period in the long-term perspective required for sustaining peace. That also requires the promotion of an institutional capacity to protect and promote human rights, guarantee the rule of law and combat impunity for serious human rights violations reported in Darfur, to which women, children and displaced persons are particularly vulnerable. We must reiterate our condemnation of any form of sexual violence by expressing our concern about and deep sympathy for the violations suffered by 80 minors over recent months, and stressing that their medical and psychological care must be a priority.

We underscore the importance of the cooperation framework with the United Nations announced by the Government to counter human rights violations and in particular sexual violence linked to conflict. In that regard, we highlight the importance of the recent sentencing of a member of the Sudanese Armed Forces to 20 years' imprisonment for the rape of a minor. We also highlight the progress made by the Government in preventing the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Furthermore, we recognize the improvements made to access for humanitarian assistance, and in particular the decision of the Government to allow assistance in the rebel-held areas in Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

Before I conclude, we would like to express our support for the benchmarks and indicators for the exit of UNAMID proposed by the Secretary-General, and stress the need to continue supporting Darfur during the transition period. UNAMID will require funds and personnel in order to build sustainable peace. We believe that a decrease in peacekeeping costs should allow for more investment in sustainable development. In that regard, we welcome the efforts of the African Union and the United Nations to attract potential donors, as well as the creation of a group of friends of the transition.

We express our support also for the recommendation that the joint strategic review of UNAMID to be presented in May 2019 also include an assessment of the implementation of the indicators of progress that I mentioned.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

We thank Joint Special Representative Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo for his briefing and take this opportunity to commend the work he is doing together with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

First, we welcome the report of continued stability in Darfur, and the fact that the security situation continued to improve during the reporting period, as well as the decrease in clashes among communities. We therefore commend the great efforts being made by the Government of the Sudan to that end. We highlight the decision of both the Government and the armed groups, including that led by Adbul Wahid, to unilaterally extend the ceasefire in the areas of operations until the end of this year, and we hope that this will be an important step towards achieving a permanent ceasefire.

Similarly, we believe that this scenario allows us to focus on addressing the root causes of the conflict and to move towards building sustainable peace. To that end, we need to strengthen the rule of law in Darfur, promote institutional capacity and the rule of law, and secure funding for activities that contribute to recovery and development in the area.

With regard to the proposed benchmarks, we underscore the way in which the Secretariat has worked on them. It is important that they be agreed with the Government, taking into account the provisions of resolution 2429 (2018) with regard to UNAMID's exit by 2020. My country agrees that we must comply with certain parameters for the Mission's exit, but those must have realistic deadlines. We also emphasize that it is essential to have adequate funding to support the Government's efforts, and we therefore call for international cooperation to that end.

With regard to the political situation, we welcome the communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council of 19 September, in which it announced its decision to consider taking measures against those who obstruct the negotiations and called on those actors to join the peace process by December, at the latest. We encourage the Security Council to support the communiqué and to take decisions along the same lines.

We recognize the efforts of the Government, the members of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and UNAMID to promote the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. We also stress the need to redouble our efforts to resolve the remaining differences on the Doha Document for Peace. We call on the non-signatory movements to participate constructively in the dialogue with the Government so as to bring about a definitive cessation of hostilities.

We emphasize that the only possible solution to the situation in Darfur is a political process that addresses the root causes of the conflict, primarily the disputes over natural resources and land ownership. We welcome the work of United Nations programmes and entities to review the progress made on issues related to land ownership, as it is key to resolving disputes among internally displaced persons and enabling their safe, dignified and voluntary return to their places of origin.

The humanitarian situation remains one of the most important challenges. The living conditions faced by internally displaced persons are a matter of great concern. We must therefore ensure unhindered access to UNAMID and humanitarian workers in order to meet local needs. Mine action, in particular the removal of explosive remnants of war, is critical to guaranteeing the safe return of internally displaced persons and the mission's secure operation.

In conclusion, we reiterate the need to create financing mechanisms to prevent the resurgence of the conflict. The support and cooperation of the international community will be fundamental to promoting sustainable development in Darfur, building the capacity of the United Nations country team and ensuring the successful withdrawal of UNAMID.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I want to express my sorrow over the passing away of the former President of the Republic of Sudan, Field Marshal Abdulrahman Suwar Al-Dahab, on 19 October. I would also like to thank you, Madam President, the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the report they jointly presented to the Security Council (S/2018/530). I thank, as well, His Excellency Ambassador Mamabolo, Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the African Union, for his briefing via video-teleconference and for his tireless efforts. Finally, I thank all Council members who have spoken in this meeting. We will definitely take their comments into account.

Since the adoption of resolution 2429 (2018), in July, the situation in Darfur has been stable to a great extent, as reflected in the report (S/2018/912) before the Council. The Sudanese Government has made considerable efforts to achieve and sustain security and stability, in conjunction with the reduction of the forces of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and its reconfiguration through the deployment of additional Sudanese police and security troops, as well as through the establishment of additional courts in districts, states and administrative units in Darfur, where 13 additional courts were established. The Government has also set up courts in Zalingei, Amri Saleh and Gulu. Courts that specialize in family and children, public funds, consumer protection, counter-terrorism, cybercrime and drug crime have also been set up in Darfur. Those efforts have reassured the people of Darfur and made them feel more secure. The establishment of additional courts strengthens justice, policing and the rule of law. We hope that the Council and its members will take note of those positive measures.

To prevent impunity, the Office of the Public Prosecutor examined 184 cases of violations from 1 January to 30 September. Of those, 102 were referred to court and many have already been adjudicated, while work is still ongoing regarding the remaining cases. Those efforts led to an increase in the rates of voluntary return. More than 385,000 previously displaced people were able to return. The Government and peace partners are working on ensuring the necessary conditions for voluntary return.

In the two resolutions adopted in June 2017 and July 2018 (resolutions 2363 (2017) and 2429 (2018)), the Council acknowledged that the situation has gone back to normal. It decided that it was time to move from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and that the transitional phase should be the responsibility of three parties, first, the Sudanese Government; secondly, the United Nations and the African Union, to complete the administrative and logistical process related to the exit of the mission; and, thirdly, the United Nations country team specifically and the international community generally. In adopting both resolutions, the Council has

practically attained the main benchmark in paragraph 24 of resolution 1769 (2007), which established UNAMID, namely, to achieve significant improvement in the situation in Darfur.

The Council may recall that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations decided that until the adoption of resolution 2363 (2017), in June, the benchmarks that were consistently highlighted and included in the report of the Secretary-General specified significant improvement. That is the correct approach, which led to the adoption of resolution 2363 (2017), followed by resolution 2429 (2018). That is why we call for the adoption of the same approach for the 2018-2020 time period. The implementation of the exit strategy must not therefore be subjected to the details of the benchmarks, but rather the benchmarks should be subjected to significant improvement.

At this juncture, we would like to thank all Council members who positively engaged with our proposals in the paper that we circulated to them two weeks ago. We thank Under-Secretary-General Lacroix for giving the Sudanese Mission more than one opportunity to clarify its view.

We refer to the statements made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Head of the Sudanese Mission for the current session of the General Assembly in his meetings with the Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-Generals at the high-level event on 28 September. He focused on the importance of the ongoing peacebuilding process, which is a responsibility shared by the three parties I mentioned, to achieve full and lasting peace. We underscore that the Sudan will continue its initiatives, which were commended by the Security Council in its consecutive resolutions since 2014, and which were also commended by the Human Rights Council in its latest resolution on the Sudan, adopted in September.

The Council might also agree with us that the latest report of the Secretary-General on UNAMID and the peace process in Darfur relies primarily on the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. It also relies on the implementation of that Document to measure progress achieved in Darfur. We strongly support that approach, and have said so repeatedly to the Council, especially during a period that can be described as somewhat uncertain. Since we have agreed on the centrality and the importance of the Doha Document, we call upon the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations to attach equal importance to the Implementation Follow-up Commission, which is composed of the permanent members of the Council, neighbouring countries of the Sudan, donor countries and partners in peace, in addition to the State of Qatar and signatory parties. The reports of that Commission issued since its establishment, in 2011, should be a point of reference for the Under-Secretary-General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in their reports to the Security Council and the Secretary-General. In the upcoming period we will be consulting with Council members, the Secretariat and the Under-Secretary-General to present concrete proposals in order to operationalize the Doha Document and its mechanisms.

The great, continuous improvement we have seen in the security and humanitarian situation in all states of Darfur since 2015 made it incumbent upon the Sudanese Government, with the support of the international community, to move Darfur from the phase of conflict to the phase of building, reconstruction and achieving the desired developmental renaissance to solidify stability. That is why the Sudanese Government participated actively in the high-level meeting that was held on the margins of the General Assembly to discuss the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Darfur.

We look forward to the implementation of the recommendation that was adopted at that meeting, namely, holding a donor conference to fund the transitional phase and support development projects that are the basis for sustainable peace and stability in Darfur. In that regard, we support what the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia said as well as the statements made by the Representative of Kuwait and others: filling the gaps in Darfur will only be achieved if the pledges are fulfilled.

Council members raised an important point, that is, Abdul Wahid is ignoring and disregarding all Security Council resolutions. Abdul Wahid's disregard of Council resolutions and Council members shows contempt for the international legitimacy embodied by the Council. No concrete and decisive measures have been taken against him. If they had been, he and his brother — who killed five from the rebel forces recently — would not have been able to commit such heinous crimes. We commend the statement made by Joint Special Representative Mamabolo and the statements made by the representatives of Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait and Kazakhstan. We cannot

forget that this pressure would be exercised on a person that controls enclaves in the mountainous area, that is a tiny piece of land — just 5 per cent of the Jebel Marra area, which constitutes 5 per cent to 6 per cent of the area of Darfur.

In conclusion, the prosperity, safety and security of the Sudanese people are a sacred duty for the Sudanese Government. That duty is complemented by the efforts of the Sudanese Government to achieve sustainable peace in the region, starting with neighbouring countries. That is precisely what the Sudanese Government is currently doing, and what the Council is witnessing. We will spare no effort to achieve those goals.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.

United Nations S/PV.8378

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8378th meeting

Tuesday, 23 October 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Solíz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2018/922)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2018/922)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic; and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa, European External Action Service.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga and Mr. Nébié are joining this meeting via video-teleconference from Bangui, and Mr. Vervaeke is joining the meeting via teleconference from Brussels.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/922, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic, 15 June-15 October 2018.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, Mr. Nébié and Mr. Vervaeke, as well as by Ambassador Kacou Houadja Léon Adom, Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (*spoke in French*): I am very pleased to brief the Security Council this morning, together with my friends Moussa Nébié and, from Brussels, Koen Vervaeke. I am also happy to see Ambassador Adom.

I am very honoured to be able to address the Council today to provide an update on the situation in the Central African Republic since the publication of the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2018/922). I am confident that, despite persistent challenges, we have laid the necessary foundations for building lasting peace in the Central African Republic. Such an objective is indeed achievable, provided that, in the quest for lasting peace, the region and the international community as a whole remain committed to our collective support for the Government and the people of the Central African Republic. To achieve this result, however, the Central Africans themselves will have to take the lead and set an example.

Since the establishment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in 2014, we have made significant progress in our efforts to put out the flames of the devastating intercommunity conflict that was engulfing the Central African Republic. Our mandate included protecting civilians, supporting the transition process and preserving the territorial integrity of country. The Mission faced a great challenge in carrying out these tasks. When I took office in August 2015, the security situation was such that simple acts of crime could turn violent and destabilize entire cities or even the entire country. The threat of a coup d'état and State collapse or the fear of seeing the country fall back into the way it was in the early days of the terrible civil war of 2013 haunted everyone.

After a little more than three years of work together, I would like to thank each member of the Council for the support offered, particularly during the difficult times that we have been through together. I am immensely grateful for Council members' empathy and encouragement, including during the happy moments we have also shared, such as when the country returned to constitutional order. I also thank the Council for the additional troops it authorized at the request of the Secretary-General. These troops strengthen our capacity on the ground and bolster the determination of our civilian and uniformed personnel. I would like to express my deep gratitude to the troops for their work in the service of peacekeeping, and we pay a solemn and heartfelt tribute to those who have sacrificed their lives.

Clearly, our work is not yet done. The country still faces many challenges. The drivers of the conflict remain, and attacks on civilians persist, leading to massive population displacements. Half of the country continues to need humanitarian assistance, and the provision of such assistance is becoming increasingly difficult, due in part to violent attacks against peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. The State is not in a position to overcome these challenges on its own.

Nevertheless, although the crisis persists, there is reason for hope. Thanks to the hard work of the United Nations and the international community in support of the Government of the Central African Republic, the overall security situation has been brought under control, democratic elections have been held, and the country has returned to constitutional order. State authority is being restored in Bangui and beyond. The Mission prevents atrocities on a daily basis and continues to preserve the territorial integrity of the State. Security has considerably improved in several prefectures, thanks, in particular, to support stemming from local peace agreements. The prefects and sub-prefects have been redeployed throughout the country, as have civil servants from the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Livestock, Water, and Public Health. The national security and defence forces have also been deployed, and the justice and reconciliation processes are beginning to take shape.

I am pleased to inform the Council that yesterday, 22 October, the inaugural session of the Special Criminal Court was held. That is an important step in the country's commitment against impunity.

In the area of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, half a dozen armed groups have committed to participate in the national programme and the Government will begin the disarmament of some of these groups in the west of the country before the end of the year. Most importantly, a peace process has been seriously initiated under the auspices of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which is the sole basis for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic. My friend and brother, the Special Representative of the President of the African Union Commission, Moussa Nébié, and Chair of the panel of facilitators, will speak of that shortly.

Beyond the work of MINUSCA, the country has made progress in implementing the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, with the support of the Mission and partners. I am pleased to announce that the rate of fundamental distribution has increased since the beginning of the year and that nearly half of the $2.2 billion pledged by donors has been disbursed. MINUSCA, the United Nations country team, the European Union, the World Bank, France and other partners are collaborating with the Government in the planning and implementation of projects under the Plan, which will strengthen peace, security and reconciliation, basic services, infrastructure and economic development. Other key bilateral partners, such as China and the United States, are also making necessary investments in the aforementioned areas.

(*spoke in English*)

This progress that we have made together makes me hopeful that we have laid the foundations needed to build sustainable peace. Like the foundations of a house, they yield no dividends on their own, but a house without foundations will certainly collapse. Together with the Central Africans, we must now help move the country from a phase of containment to one of transformation, in which the dividends of peace can be felt by all communities and all citizens.

The recommendations of the independent comprehensive review led by Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdés, endorsed by the Secretary-General and recently presented to the troop- and police-contributing countries by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix, identify some critical next steps for the Mission. In the context of mandate renewal, helping the African Initiative to succeed must indeed be the Mission's main focus. I am pleased to inform the Council that, as a follow-up to the conclusions of the high-level ministerial meeting on the Central African Republic, held in New York on 27 September, I have been participating in the African Initiative panel of facilitators as a full member. In this new capacity, I have held a series of strategic meetings and consultations within the panel and with the Government in preparation for the launch of the dialogue between the Government and the armed groups. The Mission is henceforth strengthening its substantive and mediation support to the Initiative.

The path towards peace and reconciliation will not be an easy one, as demonstrated by the many peace processes that have come before in the Central

African Republic, and faltered. We in the international community must work with the Government of the Central African Republic to ensure that this peace process is people-centred and does not fail. We must be patient, we must be realistic and we must put in place the critical conditions that will give the African Initiative the greatest chance to succeed.

First, we must ensure that the parties enter into negotiations in good faith and with a true commitment to the dialogue and its outcomes. This means that parties must be willing to make some challenging compromises, which will require vision and leadership on the part of all. It will also require an inclusive follow-up mechanism to ensure that parties adhere to and fully implement the agreement reached.

Secondly, the peace agreement must have the buy-in of the Central African people. Although the agreed dialogue framework does not allow for the direct participation of civil society actors, it will be critical to find innovative ways to ensure that the voices of the people are heard, especially those of women and youth. Their engagement in the follow-up mechanism will also be essential moving forward.

Thirdly, we must put in place security conditions conducive to the dialogue and the enforcement of its outcomes. Our engagement must be backed by credible, effective and sustained pressure, including military, when and where needed. I therefore ask for the support of the Council in ensuring that deployed troops are properly trained and equipped to meet this task and the challenging operational environment we are facing daily.

Finally, if the peace process is to succeed, it will require the unified political support of the members of the Council, the countries of the region and the international community at large. We must have a shared vision and ensure that our engagements with the Central African Republic are both well coordinated and coherent.

The success of the peace process, though necessary, will not be sufficient on its own. If the outcomes are to be sustainable and if transformation is to take hold, MINUSCA should also support the Central African Republic in a number of critical areas.

First, we must strengthen the rule of law and eliminate ungoverned spaces in the country. This includes helping the Government in the long term to regain control of mining sites from armed groups, as failure to resolve this issue will jeopardize the outcomes of any peace agreement. That also includes helping the State to rebuild and strengthen its key institutions, particularly its national security apparatus, so that it can better protect the country, its people and democratic institutions. Working closely with partners, the Mission must expand its support to the re-operationalization of national defence and security forces, in close coordination with the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, the European Union delegation in the Central African Republic, and other bilateral partners, such as France, Russia and the United States. These forces have a multiplier effect on the communities in which they are deployed. Partners have already provided exemplary support to the security sector reform process, and this has yielded remarkable progress. However, short- and mid-term needs are significant, and we must sustain and even expand this support to enable the country to meet its ambitious yet vital security priorities. I seek the Council's support to ensure that MINUSCA will have the appropriate mandate and resources to take on this task and succeed, as requested by the Secretary-General in his letter to the Council in May (S/2018/463).

Secondly, we must work hand in hand with the Central Africans to promote a culture of democracy, in which power is taken through the ballot box and not the bullet. The upcoming elections represent an important opportunity in this regard and for building a culture of inclusion. I again request the Council's support in mandating the Mission to aid the Government through the election period, and request its advocacy among Member States to ensure that we have the resources to take on this task and succeed.

Thirdly, we must continue to support the Government in the fight against impunity and the restoration of the rule of law through the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court and support for judicial actors and in the regions. We must also advance the national reconciliation programme, including by ensuring that the rights of victims are respected, in particular the rights of those hundreds of thousands of Central Africans who have been displaced by the conflict. To that end, we must help authorities develop an integrated transitional justice strategy that responds to the needs and expectations of communities that have deeply suffered as a result of the conflict.

Finally, the Mission must redouble its efforts to enable the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the 2.9 million people currently in need of assistance and protection, more than half of whom are children. Achieving that objective and improving the overall implementation of the mandate will greatly depend on the Council's decision to enhance the force's mobility and flexibility so as to allow us to overcome the prevailing operational and logistical challenges.

The people of the Central African Republic are aware that the road ahead will be difficult. Nonetheless, the steps we have collectively taken so far to help stabilize the country give hope for the future. While the current situation remains unpredictable and precarious, I believe that the progress that has been achieved in various areas and the foundations that have been laid are essential ingredients that can help bring about sustainable peace in the Central African Republic. We must redouble our efforts to ensure that the remaining challenges are addressed fully and in a timely manner. We must do everything possible to ensure that the peace process succeeds. We owe it to the people of the Central African Republic, who have suffered far too long.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Oranga-Anyanga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Nébié.

Mr. Nébié (*spoke in French*): It is always an honour for me to address the members of the Security Council, whom I thank for the invitation to update them on the situation in the Central African Republic, as well as for their ongoing interest in the country. It will be difficult to describe everything that is going on and that we are doing in the Central African Republic in five minutes, but I will strive to do so while doing justice to the issue. Without further delay, allow me to make the following points.

Since my previous briefing, on 21 June (see S/PV.8291), it should be noted that there have been significant developments pertaining to the African Union Initiative, designed to lead to the signing of a peace and reconciliation agreement between the armed groups and the Government. In accordance with its agenda, the panel of facilitators has continued its activities at an accelerated pace.

The progress that has been made on convening the dialogue includes, first, the designation of the members of the Government delegation by the President of the Central African Republic, which demonstrates his determination and commitment to the African Initiative; second, the preparation of 14 armed groups for the dialogue by holding workshops on modules for negotiations and the peaceful resolution of crises; third, dialogue preparations for the Government delegation through similar modules; fourth, preparations for civil-society actors, including women leaders and young people, to monitor the implementation of the agreement that will emerge from the dialogue; fifth, a visit by two former Heads of State of the Central African Republic, Mr. Michel Djotodia and Mr. François Bozizé, who have taken on board the message from the Chair of the African Union Commission, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, expressed their commitment without reservation to the African Initiative road map and told the panel that they would spare no effort in helping to stabilize and restore peace in their country; sixth, a working trip by the panel to the subregion in July, during which it visited N'Djamena to meet with President Deby Itno to ask for his political support for the Initiative, to which the President responded by assuring the panel of his total willingness in that regard and urged Central Africans to use the dialogue as a path to settling the crisis and achieving peace and national reconciliation within the framework of the African Initiative; seventh, the panel's holding from 28 to 30 August of a workshop on harmonizing the claims of armed groups; eighth, the panel's formal submission on 31 August to President Faustin Archange Touadera of a consolidated claims document; ninth, the Government's prompt response by way of a document entitled "Draft political agreement for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic"; and, tenth, the next and final step, the convening of the dialogue.

We should welcome that progress as a sign that new prospects are opening up for peace and reconciliation. The parties concerned now know what the dialogue will focus on, and that is important. In that regard, I would note the joint efforts led by the international community in Bangui, including the members of the G5+ — the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the European Union, France and the United States — which continue to demonstrate their shared determination to work for peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

I can inform the Council that the consultations and exchanges with stakeholders are forward-looking

and that the dialogue could be convened in the next few weeks. However, I should remind members that in my previous briefing here I emphasized the panel's financial difficulties. I repeat that message today, and I want to stress that failure is not an option. The one and only option is the success of the dialogue and the restoration of peace for the people of the Central African Republic. To achieve this significant aspect of the Security Council's task of maintaining and restoring international peace and security, it now falls to the Council to take specific, robust measures and action in support of the stakeholders of the international community on the ground, to foster and speed up the restoration of peace for the people of the Central African Republic, who have been imploring the Council to do everything possible to ensure peace and freedom of movement in their country.

As I said the last time I spoke to the Council, if its members consent to this effort and give the panel concrete support, I will be very happy to announce at the Council's next meeting on the subject that the dialogue has indeed been held, a consensus agreement reached, a monitoring mechanism put in place, that peace is no longer an empty word and that the implementation of the activities under the agreement is under way.

I should not conclude my statement without mentioning our cooperation with my brother Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and all his colleagues at the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, with whom we continue to work tirelessly to explore ways and means to support dialogue and mediation efforts for a resolution of the crisis in the country. I can emphasize that since the holding of the special meeting here in New York on 27 September, the Special Representative is now participating actively in all of the panel's meetings and its consultations with the Government delegation.

Allow me to say that all that those of us on the ground simply hope that some means can be put at our disposal and that we can make a difference after all that has happened in the past several decades. The Central African people have suffered enough from the crisis. With the Council's support, we want to make a decisive contribution so that peace can return to a country that all of us hold so dear.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Nébié for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Vervaeke.

Mr. Verbaeke: I am honoured by this opportunity to brief the Security Council, as well as for the opportunity for the European Union (EU) to address the Council today, have an exchange with Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, and Ambassador Nebié. This is the second time since the holding of the high-level event on the Central African Republic on the margins of the General Assembly that we discuss the Central African Republic. It is crucial to continue sending out clear signs of interest in the situation in that country.

We have to acknowledge that presently the country represents a combination of fragility and instability, together with a severe and still protracted humanitarian crisis. That is why we collectively need to engage and help the country to end violence and achieve lasting stability. That should also lead to accountability on the part of local actors. It is crucial that all actors remain fully focused on peace and reconciliation. The solution to the crisis is political, not military.

For its part, as expressed just last week by the European Union Foreign Ministers in Brussels, the European Union is committed to maintaining its substantial engagement and support for the Central African Republic. Our road map is clear: the consolidation of democratic institutions, the stability of institutions and security sector reform must go hand in hand. We have identified the following objectives in that process: first, the fight against impunity, including through the establishment of transitional justice; secondly, the restoration of the rule of law and of social cohesion; and, thirdly, the provision of basic services and the restarting of the economy, including through legal and sustainable use of natural resources. We welcome the efforts and progress made by President Touadera and his Government in those areas. We encourage them to continue in that direction with greater determination.

We are entering a critical phase in the Central African Republic that will require the mobilization of all international actors to coordinate our efforts in full transparency. The European Union recently held consultations with several partners, including France, Russia and the United States, in order to achieve better coordination in the field.

First and foremost, on peace and reconciliation, I would like to reiterate the European Union's full support for the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation under the auspices of the African Union and the leadership of President Touadera. The work done by the panel of facilitators under the leadership of Ambassador Nébié lays the ground for a settlement. We call on all actors, international and regional, to support the action of the Government and of the African Initiative in a properly coordinated and fully transparent manner.

We now need to progress quickly and obtain results. In that regard, the intention of President Touadera to launch negotiations with the armed groups is positive. The process must remain a home-grown one. We stand ready to support all efforts in that direction. The decision to appoint a joint United Nations-African Union envoy is a good sign of increased engagement. They will complement the work of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), specifically the efforts of the Special Representative and the MINUSCA team in the country. I would like to take this opportunity to commend their efforts under very difficult circumstances and to pay tribute to all MINUSCA personnel.

The renewal of MINUSCA's mandate will soon be discussed. Its multidimensional role will remain essential to contribute to further stabilization in the Central African Republic. It will be crucial that the Mission remain able to strengthen and expand the authority of the State throughout the territory of the Central African Republic. That will not be achieved without a further build-up and deployment of security forces into the regions. MINUSCA must be able to provide operational and logistical support to the deployed Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA), as recommended by the Secretary-General.

In that vein, the European Union will continue its substantial engagement in the area of security. The mandate of the European Union Training Mission has been extended until September 2020. A third FACA battalion was successfully trained. A fourth battalion is currently being trained. Additionally, most of the needed laws, decrees and doctrines have been developed with the support of the European Union Training Mission strategic advice. About a third of the FACA leadership has gone through the Training Mission's programme. That is a testimony to the Training Mission's leading role in building the capacity of the FACA and in defence sector reform in general.

European Union Mission activities also aim at facilitating the redeployment of FACA and the implementation of the national defence plan in Bouar. That is one of our priorities. In that regard, I would also like to stress the need for the mission to be able to work together with FACA and access all training premises in order to fulfil its mandate. That support to FACA in the military domain is complemented by EU support to the civilian security forces. We are using various EU instruments to advise the Ministry of the Interior, the police and the gendarmerie. That is without prejudice to possible increased support in future in support of capacity development and the deployment of internal security forces.

The European Union will also continue assisting the Central African Republic by strengthening the resilience of the population and of the State, while fully applying the approach linking relief, rehabilitation and development and the humanitarian-development nexus. The overall European Union development assistance for the Central African Republic for the period 2017-2020 amounts to close to €500 million.

I hope I have given you, Mr. President, a fair account of our commitment to continue supporting the Central African Republic as an illustration of strong trilateral coordination and cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union. I know the European leadership will remain engaged in the coming months, and I urge all partners to join our collective efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Vervaeke for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Adom.

Mr. Adom: I have the honour to make this statement in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic. In my presentation I intend to provide an overview of the Committee's work since my predecessor last briefed the Council (see S/PV.8187) on 22 February 2018, and, in doing so, highlight the activities of the Committee and the Panel of Experts, particularly my recent visit to the Central African Republic.

The security situation in the Central African Republic has remained volatile throughout the country

over the course of 2018, with marked deterioration in the humanitarian situation and continued attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel by predatory armed groups. Despite that downturn, the Government of the Central African Republic has made tangible progress in terms of security sector reform, with the valuable assistance of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the European Union Training Mission, the Russian Federation, the United States and France, as well as bilateral, regional and international partners. We can now see that progress on the ground as the Central African Republic armed forces and internal security forces are gradually deploying across the country, together with MINUSCA personnel.

Since my predecessor's previous briefing to the Council, the Committee has held a total of six meetings: on 23 February, 16 March, 25 May, 22 June, 20 July and 7 September. The press releases summarizing those meetings are available on the Committee's web page. Nonetheless, I would like to highlight several of the Committee's activities, which are focused on the monitoring of the sanctions measures.

The Committee has advanced its close cooperation with the Central African Republic authorities and regional and neighbouring States in order to strengthen the implementation of the sanctions measures and to improve regional cooperation in that regard. On 7 September, the Committee convened a briefing for all Member States, including the Central African Republic and its neighbouring and regional States, to discuss the midterm report of the Panel of Experts and the recommendations contained therein (see S/2018/729). The deliberations proved to be of great value and provided an opportunity to exchange ideas on how to enhance regional cooperation in countering arms embargo violations and addressing cross-border arms trafficking and the exploitation of natural resources by armed groups. The root causes of the conflict in the Central African Republic cannot be addressed without the close involvement of the region and neighbouring States. I see the sanctions regime as a valuable vehicle to help bring the countries of the region closer together to address the management of small arms and light weapons.

Following a recommendation of the Panel's midterm report, the Committee has encouraged the authorities of the Central African Republic and neighbouring States to establish, activate or reactivate commissions to address transborder issues, including matters that are relevant to the United Nations sanctions regime or that affect insecurity in the Central African Republic, such as the implementation of the travel ban on sanctioned individuals, transhumance or trafficking in arms and natural resources.

In addition, I would like to commend the work of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), which provided training to the Forces armées centrafricaines and internal security forces on the safe and effective management of weapons and ammunition in the country. UNMAS will continue to improve weapons and ammunitions storage facilities and construct permanent armouries outside Bangui, such as in Bouar, in the months to come. Together with the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, on 22 June UNMAS briefed the Committee on its assistance to the authorities of the Central African Republic, which, unfortunately, has been placed at risk due to a scarcity of funding. In that regard, I would like to call on Member States to provide additional funding to UNMAS and earmark it for weapons and ammunitions projects in the Central African Republic. It is important that the international community continue to assist the authorities of the Central African Republic in ensuring the effective management of weapons and ammunitions, which is a prerequisite in countering the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the Central African Republic and the wider region.

Concerning the travel ban, the Committee and the Panel of Experts have actively engaged with relevant actors and Member States and provided information on the appropriate travel ban exemption procedure to advance mediation activities, pursuant to resolution 2399 (2018) and Committee guidelines. In that regard, once again I would like to encourage the authorities of the Central African Republic and relevant Member States to use that tool to fully comply with the sanctions regime. It is unfortunate that no Member State, since the establishment of the sanctions regime in 2013, has requested an exemption to the travel ban, although the Committee is well aware that sanctioned individuals are travelling.

With regard to the assets freeze, in its midterm report the Panel of Experts reiterated that the authorities of the Central African Republic had yet to freeze the accounts and assets and halt the payment of salaries to sanctioned individuals Alfred Yékatom, Eugène Ngaïkosset and Habib Soussou. I stressed the same

during my recent visit to the Central African Republic and hope that appropriate measures will be taken as soon as possible.

Along those lines, I would like to express my sincere words of gratitude to the authorities of the Central African Republic for their hospitality and engagement during my visit to Bangui and Kaga Bandoro from 2 to 5 October, together with Committee representatives of France, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, the United States, the Embassy representatives of China and the Russian Federation in Bangui, and several members of the Panel of Experts. I would also like to convey my words of gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of MINUSCA, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, and his colleagues at the Mission for their outstanding support to my delegation.

My visit to the Central African Republic was the third by the Chair since the establishment of the Committee in 2013, but the first since May 2016. During the visit, the authorities of the Central African Republic unanimously called for the lifting of the arms embargo as it relates to the Government so that the armed forces can deploy throughout the national territory and protect the population from the predations of armed groups. They also expressed the view that the embargo is affecting only the Government and not preventing the armed groups from receiving weapons and ammunition via the country's porous borders.

For my part, I underlined that it is the prerogative of the Security Council, and not the Sanctions Committee, to ease, strengthen or lift the arms embargo. I also echoed the conclusions of the Secretary-General's letter of 31 July to the President of the Security Council on benchmarks to assess the arms embargo — namely, that the "embargo has not prevented the Government from receiving weapons through the prevailing exemption provisions" (*S/2018/752, p.7*). As the Secretary-General noted in his letter, it would be important to assess the embargo according to the three key benchmarks: first, progress on security sector reform, including the armed forces and the internal security forces and their needs; secondly, progress on national weapons management and ammunition capacity; and, thirdly, progress on the effective monitoring and management of borders to address the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Adom for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, which is being held at a particularly important time for the Central African Republic. I would also like to thank our briefers for their very enlightening statements.

The situation in the Central African Republic remains especially fragile because of the violence perpetrated by armed groups against civilians, in particular women and children, humanitarian and medical personnel and the Blue Helmets. Abuses committed against internally displaced persons in Bria in September, during clashes between ex-Séléka and anti-balaka factions, are tragic and unacceptable. In that challenging environment, we reiterate our full support for President Touadera's efforts to promote national reconciliation and re-establish State authority. We encourage him to continue working for justice, disarmament and the country's economic recovery.

We also believe that the message to armed groups must be clear. They must lay down their weapons, commit themselves immediately and unconditionally to the peace process and understand that the violence they perpetrate will not go unpunished. In that regard, France welcomes yesterday's inaugural session of the Special Criminal Court, which marked the official launch of investigations into gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in the country. It is an important step in the crucial fight against impunity.

The current situation, as worrisome as it is, must not overshadow the genuine progress that has been made since last year. It shows that a solution to the crisis is possible.

We therefore welcome the holding of the high-level meeting on the Central African Republic on the margins of the General Assembly, which reaffirmed the international community's support for the Central African Republic and emphasized that the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is the only framework for the peace process in the country. That is an essential point. In that context, while the list of the claims of the armed

groups was finalized and sent to the Central African authorities at the meeting in August organized in Bouar by the panel of facilitators of the African Initiative, the priority now must be to move forward, without delay, towards a direct dialogue between the Central African Government and the armed groups in order to reach a comprehensive political agreement that leaves no issue aside, particularly that of the fight against impunity. In that regard, I would like to highlight three elements that we consider crucial to the success of the African Initiative.

First, we believe it is essential to avoid parallel initiatives, which lead to confusion, and to ensure that all partners of the Central African Republic are well-coordinated. That is a prerequisite for the success of the African Initiative. It is also crucial that the African Union and all of the States in the region continue their commitment, at the highest level, in order to ensure the success of the next steps in the implementation of the road map adopted in Libreville. In that regard, we welcome the recent decision of the United Nations and the African Union to appoint a joint special envoy to support the African Initiative, and who, of course, will have the full support of France. Finally, we believe it is important that the direct dialogue between the Central African Government and the armed groups involve other segments of Central African society, in particular women, whose participation in the peace process is essential.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming France's full support for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic. As a mission that operates in a difficult environment, MINUSCA plays an indispensable role, whether in protecting civilians, supporting the peace process, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance or supporting the recovery of the Central African Republic. As such, MINUSCA requires the full support of everyone. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to the peacekeepers who pay a heavy price for their service in the Central African Republic. I would also like to commend all the efforts undertaken by MINUSCA to increase its mobility, reduce its footprint, improve its operational performance and continue the work that has already begun with the troop-contributing countries to prevent cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and ensure that they do not go unpunished. Those welcome efforts must clearly continue.

In that context, as the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate approaches, France fully supports the Secretary-General's recommendations, in particular that of maintaining MINUSCA's robust format and mandate. We also feel it is crucial that MINUSCA be able to strengthen its role in supporting the political process. In that regard, we welcome the decision of the United Nations and the African Union to integrate MINUSCA into the African Initiative and to integrate the Special Representative into the panel of facilitators. France strongly urges the Security Council to authorize UNMISCA to provide limited logistical support for the gradual and controlled redeployment of the Forces armées centrafricaines trained or certified by the European Union Military Training Mission (EUTM) in the Central African Republic. That support, alongside internal security forces, is essential to enable the restoration of Government authority in all its administrative, security and judicial components — that is our collective priority. It is a high expectation of the Central African authorities and the Central African population itself. I would like, once again, to commend the excellent work of the EUTM in supporting the reform of the security sector in the Central African Republic.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the importance for the Council and the entire international community to remain mobilized and united in support of MINUSCA and in favour of lasting peace in the Central African Republic. That is one of the conditions for success in supporting the Central African Republic and all Central Africans, and it is in that spirit that France will present, in the coming days, a draft resolution for the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to take the floor in my capacity as the representative of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. My delegation also thanks Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, for his briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic. We also thank Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic and Head of the African Union Mission for the Central African

Republic and Central Africa, and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, for the quality of their statements.

My delegation welcomes the progress made by the Central African authorities in the process of emerging from the crisis, in particular in their implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration pilot project; community violence reduction programmes; security sector reform and the deployment of defence and security forces; and the restoration of Government authority, justice and reconciliation.

Despite the progress made, there are still many political, security and humanitarian challenges to overcome. At the political level, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the Central African authorities' stated willingness to prioritize dialogue with all national and regional actors. That willingness to engage in dialogue, particularly with armed groups and all civil society actors, which is perfectly in line with the African Union's African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, leads us to believe in a peaceful and sustainable way to end the crisis in the Central African Republic. Côte d'Ivoire therefore expresses its support for the African Initiative and welcomes, in that regard, the decision of the United Nations and the African Union to jointly appoint a special envoy to foster efforts to effectively implement the Initiative.

The recurrence of attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, as well as the looting and burning of many villages by armed groups, particularly in the central and south-eastern parts of the country, are areas of concern to which prompt responses must be provided. We must also condemn the violence perpetrated by those groups, which has resulted in the deaths of several displaced persons and three Russian journalists. My country encourages the Central African authorities to continue efforts to restore Government authority throughout the national territory, which to date has enabled districts such as Bangassou, Bouar and Paoua to regain relative security. The process of restoring Government authority must be carried out based on the joint deployment operation of the Forces armées centrafricaines and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) forces. In that regard, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the efforts made by the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, whose renewed mandate will make it possible to train and expand the defence and security forces of the Central African Republic.

On the humanitarian front, the situation on the ground is marked by the looting and burning of villages by armed groups in areas under their control. Those acts of violence are causing massive population displacement and worsening the humanitarian situation; there are more than 600,000 displaced people and 572,000 refugees. Similarly, frequent attacks on humanitarian convoys by armed groups constitute major obstacles to the delivery of aid to the population and make the situation on the ground particularly difficult and complex. My delegation pays tribute to the memory of all the humanitarian workers who have lost their lives during their noble mission in the Central African Republic and wish the wounded a speedy recovery.

We urge MINUSCA to strengthen protection for civilians and for humanitarian workers in carrying out their tasks in the Central African Republic. In that regard, my delegation commends the excellent work done on a daily basis by Special Representative Onanga-Anyanga and his colleagues. We also call on the international community and bilateral and multilateral partners, as well as donors, to increase their support for the work of humanitarian agencies in the country. Côte d'Ivoire reiterates its support for MINUSCA and endorses the recommendations of the Secretary-General aimed at strengthening its presence and tasks in view of the renewal of the Mission's mandate.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire urges the United Nations, the countries of the region and neighbouring States in particular, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to maintain their level of commitment to the success of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's thanks to Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic; Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director of the European External Action Service for Africa, as well as Ambassador Kacou

Houadja Léon Adom, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic, for their comprehensive briefings on the current situation in the Central African Republic.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea remains concerned about the sporadic resurgence of violence and the virulence with which the ex-Séléka and anti-balaka armed groups have taken control of part of the country and are attacking civilian and military targets. We strongly condemn the incidents that took place on 4 October in the town of Sosso-Nakombo, in the south-west of the country, where three Chinese citizens were killed by residents of the area and another three were injured. We equally condemn the attacks against civilians in the town of Bria and on the Bria-Irabanda route, in the south of the country, where at least 30 people died and four were injured. We recall that such attacks are unacceptable and can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea expresses its deepest condolences to the Governments of the People's Republic of China and the Central African Republic for those irreparable losses in human life, while expressing our solidarity with the families of the victims of the attacks. We wish those who have been injured a swift recovery.

As we commend the excellent work being carried out by MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea encourages it to persist and to spare no effort to support the Central African authorities in order to ensure that the perpetrators of such criminal acts are prosecuted and brought to justice. We call on the ex-Séléka coalition and the anti-balaka groups operating in those regions to put an immediate end to all attacks against the civilian population and to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. We stress that only a comprehensive and inclusive political solution that supports the development of effective and inclusive public institutions and guarantees accountability for such acts will help to put an end to the attacks against the rule of law and civilians.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea is optimistic about the high-level meeting held on the sidelines of the current session of the General Assembly, co-chaired by the President of the Central African Republic, His Excellency Mr. Faustin Touadera; Secretary-General António Guterres; Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; and Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States. The meeting undoubtedly made it possible to reaffirm the importance of an inclusive political process in the Central African Republic, as well as reforms in the security sector, through the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation. Moreover, political efforts and dialogue are the only alternatives likely to bring about long-awaited peace dividends and national and regional stability. They are also the most likely means to incite armed groups to sign a peace agreement with the Government, hand over their weapons and engage in the country's development efforts.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea firmly believes in supporting the African Initiative in strengthening the general framework for dialogue between the armed groups and the Central African Government. We recognize and appreciate the efforts of MINUSCA in playing a more important role in the Initiative process. In that context, it is necessary to welcome the continued progress made by MINUSCA in the implementation of its political strategy in support of Government reform efforts and the national peace process through agreements at the national level, adapted to specific local contexts and prevailing armed groups. Those efforts have had a significant impact on the decrease in attacks against civilians in recent months. In Bangui, for example, intercommunal dialogue in the third district facilitated the gradual return of displaced persons following Operation Sukula. Local peace and reconciliation processes in Markounda and Zemio helped to reduce violence and increase the freedom of movement, as well as facilitating the return of State authorities.

Our delegation also welcomes the valuable contribution of the Sudan and the Russian Federation to efforts aimed at achieving peace by organizing and supporting a meeting with the three main ex-Séléka factions and an anti-balaka faction in Khartoum on 28 August. In their statements, the armed factions committed themselves to support peace and dialogue within the framework of the African Initiative.

We also want to highlight the role of the Central African Government in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, which is supported by MINUSCA and was successfully launched in the western part of the country with seven armed groups. As we speak, the Government continues to work with other armed groups

to reach new agreements and extend disarmament and demobilization to other parts of the country. It should be emphasized that the programme constitutes a precondition for the establishment and strengthening of State authority, and therefore for the full training and rearmament of the Forces armées centrafricaines.

Despite all those efforts in the reconciliation process of this brotherly country and the achievements made, the Central African Republic remains an extremely fragile State, threatened by a risk of reversion. The Central African Republic is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis in the absence of opportunities for development and recovery due to continuing insecurity and a lack of purchasing power for its better development. In that regard, we reaffirm the notion that the multifaceted problems faced by the Central African Republic cannot be solved by focusing on security-based solutions alone. The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea believes in a comprehensive and sustainable solution to respond to instability in Central Africa. The absence of peace and stability in the country requires us to go beyond simply containing violence. We must build a resilient society and institutions that guarantee human security in Central Africa.

On the other hand, we remain concerned about widespread rape and sexual assaults on women committed by ex-Séléka and anti-balaka armed groups and the Lord's Resistance Army, who maintain a strong presence in various areas. The vast majority of identified cases of sexual violence of an ethnic and sectarian nature impede the mobility necessary for women in the Central African Republic to carry out vital economic and livelihood activities, such as gaining access to crop fields, markets and adequate education. Consequently, we urge Government and non-State actors to agree on and implement a structured commitment within a set time frame to prevent and respond to those violations, including the development of a comprehensive national strategy on sexual and gender-based violence. In accordance with the Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the alleged victims must be assisted by the United Nations system through medical and psychosocial support.

Looking to the future, we must continue to strive to transform the political and security context and support national efforts to bring the country from war to peace. The need for all countries in the subregion to continue to participate constructively and for all mediation efforts to be closely coordinated within the framework of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic to strengthen the peace process is also of fundamental importance. Likewise, we must achieve an inclusive and transparent electoral process that will lead to the presidential and legislative elections of 2020 and 2021, respectively, as an integral part of the political process.

We align ourselves with the press release on 19 September by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, which underscores the need for political actors in the Central African Republic to fully and in good faith take ownership of the peace and reconciliation process in their country, in the knowledge that the countries of the region and partners cannot substitute the Central Africans themselves in seeking a sustainable solution. In that regard, the words of Mr. Nébié concerning the meeting held by Mr. Mahamat with former Presidents François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia fill us with optimism and hope, the result of which we hope will lead the way to reconciliation and peace in Central Africa.

I would like to reiterate our congratulations to the Special Representative Onanga-Anyanga for his considerable efforts and leadership in successfully completing the process of peace and political development, in spite of the extremely difficult context, as well as to His Excellency President Touadera and the Central African Republic Government for the efforts being made in favour of peace and reconciliation. I would also like to express the support of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his latest report of 15 October (S/2018/922) on the extension of MINUSCA's mandate for one more year until 15 November 2019, which is why we have already expressed the Republic of Equatorial Guinea's support for the draft resolution that is soon to be presented by France in that regard. Finally, we suggest that the Council visit this suffering brotherly country in the course of this year to bring a message of encouragement, support and solidarity to its Government and the population, just as the Holy Father, Pope Francis, did a few years ago.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China listened attentively to today's briefings.

Under the leadership of President Touadera, the political process in the Central African Republic has recently made positive progress, but the security

situation in the country remains fragile. There are still violent clashes between armed groups and the realization of lasting peace and stability in the Central African Republic continues to face challenges. China welcomes the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to strengthen the deployment of national security forces, advance security sector reform and enhance capacity-building. We call on parties in the Central African Republic to proceed based on the interests of the country and its people to concretely advance disarmament and the peace and reconciliation process and resolve differences through dialogue and consultation.

China appreciates the important role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in maintaining stability in the Central African Republic and supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, and the whole of MINUSCA in actively fulfilling their mandates and carrying out their activities. China also supports MINUSCA in enhancing its self-defence, security and early-warning capabilities. The Secretariat should fully heed the legitimate concerns of the troop- and police-contributing countries and take concrete and effective measures to ensure the safety of the peacekeepers in order to improve the effectiveness of MINUSCA.

China notes the Secretary-General's assessment of the work of MINUSCA and the relevant recommendation of adjustment in his latest report (S/2018/922). We will actively participate in the consultations on relevant draft resolutions of the Security Council and will play a constructive role. Regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, as well as the countries of the region, all play an important role in advancing the peace process in the Central African Republic. The United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union, should strengthen their coordination with the Government of the Central African Republic to promote peace, reconciliation and dialogue and jointly help the Central African Republic to realize peace and development at an early date. China calls on the international community to continue to provide support to the Government of the Central African Government in its efforts to enhance national capacity-building and provide necessary assistance to the Government in its efforts to maintain social security and stability, deal with the humanitarian crisis and resolve the root causes of the conflict.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the convening of this meeting and the briefings of Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Mr. Koen Vervaeke and Ambassador Kacou Houadja Léon Adom.

Peru notes with deep concern the persistence of the crisis in the Central African Republic, despite the efforts made by the international community and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). The progress made in the political sphere has not yet been reflected in security improvements or alleviating the serious humanitarian situation. Most of the country is living in a state of conflict due to, among other factors, the precarious situation of the State, the illegal exploitation of natural resources by armed groups, the illicit trafficking of weapons and the incitement to violence, including inter-ethnic violence.

We regret that that violence is affecting the civilian population, humanitarian personnel and MINUSCA, and that the number of internally displaced persons and refugees continues to increase, in a country where more than half of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance. Given that situation, we deem it necessary for the Security Council to continue supporting the authorities of the Central African Republic in their efforts to assert State authority and achieve peace and national reconciliation. At the same time, we believe that the mandate of MINUSCA, which is about to be renewed, should prioritize the following three points.

First, it should provide support for the political process. The Mission should help implement the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and support the authorities in organizing and conducting the 2020 and 2021 elections. We emphasize the importance of linking the African Initiative with the peace agreements reached in places such as Bangassou, Bangui and Bouar, as well as promoting greater citizen participation in the political life of the country, especially women and young people.

Secondly, it should support the security strategy. Political progress depends to a large extent on the ability of the armed forces and police to protect the civilian population. We consider it of the utmost importance to reinforce the support that MINUSCA

has been providing in that area, in cooperation with the European Union. We also consider it necessary for the political process to prioritize the full implementation of security sector reform and programmes on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and on reducing communal violence. In that regard, we also underscore the role of local, subregional and regional cooperation to effectively address the complex situation in the Central African Republic. In particular, the mixed commissions should serve to strengthen the border controls required to deal with illicit trafficking in persons, natural resources and arms.

Thirdly, I turn to institutional strengthening. Achieving sustainable peace requires national institutions and capacities equipped to prevent and resolve disputes peacefully, guarantee access to justice and accountability for crimes committed and, on that basis, promote national reconciliation. To that end, we stress the importance of MINUSCA's contribution to the establishment of the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission in the context of a national transitional justice strategy that, inter alia, will make it possible to assist the victims of sexual violence and the recruitment of children by armed groups. We recognize the efforts of the Central African authorities to establish and operationalize their national judicial institutions, especially the Special Criminal Court.

The solution to the crisis requires a long-term multidimensional approach to address the root causes of the conflict. In that regard, we highlight the Government's efforts embodied in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. We also highlight the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Peacebuilding Commission in conflict prevention and resolution and institutional development and strengthening.

I conclude by renewing our commitment to building sustainable peace in the Central African Republic and, as a troop-contributing country, our strong support for MINUSCA, and by stressing the importance of the renewal of its mandate for the Central African population and the stability of the subregion.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): I too thank each of our three briefers today for their presentations and for the work that they have done in support of peace and security in the Central African Republic over the past year. We would also like to extend our thanks to Ambassador Adom for his exceptional leadership in bringing the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) to Bangui earlier this month for a trip that was enlightening and instructive for everyone. We particularly note his leadership in sharing Côte d'Ivoire's positive experience with a post-conflict arms embargo.

One year ago, the United States joined other Security Council members to support an increase in the troop ceiling of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) by 900 military personnel, thereby reaffirming the depth of our commitment to the peace and security of the Central African Republic. Despite notable delays in receiving those troops, MINUSCA continued to make progress on its mandated tasks, which resulted in significant gains in the security and stability of the Central African Republic. That became clear to us when a United States delegation visited Bangassou earlier this month — something that would have been impossible year ago. They heard first-hand accounts of the positive impact MINUSCA has had there. There is no doubt in our minds that MINUSCA is making a positive difference in the lives of Central Africans.

There has also been notable progress in restoring State authority and building the capacity of the Central African Government, including the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) and internal security forces. The fact that there are now four FACA battalions, and more to come, trained by the European Union (EU) and deployed around the country, proves that the Central African Republic is on a positive trajectory.

We further commend the progress of the Central African Government, assisted by MINUSCA and other international partners, in operationalizing the Special Criminal Court. The official opening of investigations by the Special Criminal Court this month marks an important step forward in the fight against impunity and ensuring justice for victims. There are still many chalienges to overcome. We are particularly concerned about the situation around Bria, with attacks on civilians in August and September and the kidnapping last week of United Nations police officers.

Our collective goal should be a political solution for durable peace and recovery. The United States believes that the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic represents the best path to achieving that goal and enabling the conditions for

the extension of State authority to promote development. However, in order for the African Initiative to be successful, every actor must commit to transparency and coordination. As I said at the high-level ministerial meeting on the Central African Republic peace process, the Central African people have seen previous dialogues that produced agreements, but not results. We must all work together in good faith to change that narrative and to support President Touadera and his Government as they strive for peace, justice, accountability and the prevention of future atrocities.

For our part, the United States will financially support the African Initiative. We are working in partnership with the EU, MINUSCA and Central African officials to ensure that peace talks address the underlying causes of armed conflict. We are also carefully considering the Secretary-General's recommendations for changes to MINUSCA's mandate and look forward to a conversation about the best means to achieve our common goals.

The people of the Central African Republic have already seen multiple peace agreements signed, followed by collapse. They have heard about programmes to demobilize, disarm and reintegrate former combatants, which enriched the few, but not the many. They have seen previous attempts at security sector reform fail and they continue to rely on humanitarian aid to survive. Whatever we agree in the next mandate renewal, it should be based on the lessons that we have learned from the past to help the Central African people seize a brighter future. We look forward to working with the Council and our United Nations counterparts in that effort.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): I would like to extend our thanks to all of our briefers. I would like in particular to ask Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga and Special Representative Moussa Nébié to pass on to their teams on the ground the thanks of the Council for the work they do in difficult circumstances, and I echo my American colleague's thanks and tribute to the Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire for the very important work he has personally been spearheading on behalf of us all.

We share the Secretary General's assessment that the security situation in the Central African Republic remains extremely fragile — a message repeated in a letter sent to all of us today by 45 non-governmental organizations active in that country. As our briefers today have illustrated, there are some positive signals of progress in the Central African Republic, but the security, humanitarian and justice situations remain concerning. The international community must not relax its efforts towards building a secure, stable and peaceful Central African Republic.

Civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers continue to be attacked. More than one in four Central Africans remain displaced. Half of the population is in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. Only 36 per cent of the 2018 humanitarian response plan has been funded. We encourage all Member States to help fill that gap. The United Kingdom has provided £63 million, or $81 million, in humanitarian aid to the Central African Republic since 2015. We believe that this aid supports progress towards a stable, secure and peaceful Central African Republic — something that remains in all of our interests.

It is clear that in order to achieve peace in the Central African Republic, efforts to stabilize the country in the short-term must go hand in hand with longer-term progress on reconciliation, justice and peacebuilding. We therefore welcome the efforts of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which remains the only viable path to peace. I agree wholeheartedly with the French Ambassador on the need to avoid paraliel initiatives, which risk confusion, or worse. Coordinated and sustained international support is vital if the Central African Republic is to achieve long-lasting peace and stability. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that there should be greater United Nations involvement in the Initiative to ensure link up between political peace and security efforts and to reinforce coordination between national and international partners on the Central African Republic's road to peace.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has an essential role to play in supporting the peace initiative, and the United Kingdom is committed to working with colleagues on the Security Council to ensure that MINUSCA can deliver that support as part of its stabilization mandate. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation for MINUSCA's renewed focus on the peace process, including through more direct engagement.

Also, in support of MINUSCA's mandate delivery, we commend the Secretary-General's plan to introduce a performance management mechanism to alleviate some of the pressures on the Mission. That will give it a greater ability to improve performance and to enforce the zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse and exploitation and sexual harassment. I note in that context Special Representative Onanga-Anyanga's comments about ensuring that troops that are deployed are properly trained and equipped. He is right in saying that it is a responsibility of the Council.

We also welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish and implement a comprehensive, strategic outreach and communication plan, making clear what MINUSCA is delivering for the people of the Central African Republic, building a better understanding of the peace process and making sure we take into account the views and needs of Central Africans. As we have all heard and seen many times in the Council, an inclusive peace process that ensures the participation of women is more likely to be sustainable and successful.

Among these concerns respecting the Central African Republic, we must remember that there can be no peace without justice. Incitement to violence, including on religious and ethnic grounds, and attacks on civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers will continue unchecked if perpetrators perceive impunity to be the standard. We recognize the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic, together with MINUSCA, to bring some of the perpetrators of serious crimes to account. In that regard, we hope that the positive news of the inaugural session of the Special Criminal Court yesterday will soon translate into concrete progress in the fight against impunity, especially now that the Court's investigations can officially commence.

We urge the Central African Republic to work with international partners to expedite progress on criminal and transitional justice and ensure that judicial mechanisms are in place to support due process on these and other cases. That remains an essential component to bringing stability to the Central African Republic. The international community and the Government of the Central African Republic have come a long way since elections in 2015. We must continue to unite in our focus on building peace and stability in the country and on creating the conditions for the long-term protection and prosperity that the people deserve.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga; the Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic, Mr. Moussa Nébié; the Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, Mr. Vervaeke; and the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, Ambassador Adom of Côte d'Ivoire, for their important updates and outstanding leadership. We also welcome to the Chamber Ambassador Kpongo, Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic.

My delegation has some observations to share on key salient points.

First, on the political front, we underline that the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic remains the principle framework for the peace process in that country. In that regard, we welcome the work of the Initiative's panel of facilitators to prepare the dialogue between the Government and armed groups. We express our hope that all stakeholders will cooperate in a constructive manner and are committed to pursuing dialogue and confidence-building measures.

It is also important that all peace initiatives within the framework of the African Initiative be harmonized to ensure the coherence of the peace process, and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should be an integral partner. In that regard, we welcome the decision of the United Nations and African Union leadership to nominate a prominent figure as a guarantor of the peace process who will coordinate the efforts of all involved partners, thereby facilitating enhanced regional engagement. The committed support of regional and international partners in that process is also crucial. In that connection, we appreciate the mediation efforts of the Sudan, with the support of the Russian Federation, and look forward to peace negotiations in Khartoum, hopefully in December. We believe that the Sudan should be an important part of the solution.

We also note the important role that MINUSCA plays in advancing the peace process through a wide range of activities, including by providing its good offices, formulating its security posture, offering its substantive expertise and facilitating the disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration process. It also plays a critical role in security sector reform and transitional justice. We therefore endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation to reinforce MINUSCA's priority mandated task to support the political process by increasing its substantive and mediation components to promote that initiative and to align its political and security strategies with the African Initiative.

We also reognize the need for the Government, the African Initiative and MINUSCA to undertake comprehensive strategic communications and outreach plans, aimed at informing the population about the peace process, understanding local perceptions and motivations, and explaining the Mission's mandate and actions.

We further acknowledge the committed efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic, under the leadership of President Touadera, to extend State authority throughout the country, including through the implementation of local peace and reconciliation initiatives. We call on the international community to extend greater support to the Central African Republic authorities in order to increase the State's security and institutional capacities, which take on greater importance in the light of upcoming elections in 2020 and 2021.

Secondly, on the security front, we strongly condemn the continued attacks by armed groups on civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. Intensified sectarian rhetoric and intercommunal disputes result in higher levels of violence, thereby undermining all efforts to achieve national reconciliation.

We underline that with MINUSCA, as the primary force providing security while at the same time being overstretched, national authorities bear the primary responsibility to protect civilians. To that end, the greater support of international partners to boost the capacity of the national security forces is needed, as is the development of a comprehensive strategy on the protection of civilians involving all relevant actors. We commend the invaluable contribution of the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, with the operational support of MINUSCA, in training and deploying the Central African armed forces. We also draw attention to the need to ensure the security of peacekeepers.

On the humanitarian front, against a backdrop of underfunding and a reduced humanitarian presence, the increasing numbers of internally displaced people and refugees from the Central African Republic in neighbouring countries demand the international community's immediate attention and financial support.

Finally, we would like to stress that all international efforts to stabilize the Central African Republic must be complemented by a comprehensive strategy to address the root causes of the crisis, including through increased investment in the economy, job creation and better living conditions for the Central Africans. We welcome the continued engagement of the European Union and the World Bank in their efforts to create a conducive economic environment. We also support the draft resolution on MINUSCA, to be submitted soon by France.

Lastly, it is just as crucial that MINUSCA and the United Nations country team, along with other partners, continue to support the Government in implementing the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for the 2017-2021 period.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga; the Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic, Mr. Moussa Nébié; and Mr. Koen Vervaeke for their briefings on the latest developments in the Central African Republic and the activities of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We also appreciate Ambassador Léon Adom for his briefing on the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic and the outcome of his recent visit to Central African Republic. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of the Central African Republic, who is participating in this meeting.

The Central African Republic continues to face enormous challenges. The absence of State authority in most parts of the country and the activities of armed opposition groups and self-defence militias fighting for land and resources by illegal parallel administration and taxation structures are plunging the country into yet another cycle of violence and conflict. We recognize the efforts of President Touadera and his Government, including in the areas of security sector reform and the establishment of functioning State structures, with the support from MINUSCA. We appreciate the role of

the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, as well as several bilateral, regional and international partners in that regard.

However, we wish to emphasize the importance of creating strong national ownership and building the necessary momentum for genuine and inclusive dialogue, in the context of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, to address the most pressing challenges facing the country in stabilizing the security situation, expanding State authority and putting in place inclusive governance structures.

We are encouraged by the increasing support for the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic led by the African Union (AU). We underscore the need for closer coordination and synergy among African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and all other actors involved in bringing peace and stability to the country. In this context, we welcome the holding of the high-level ministerial meeting on the sidelines of the General Assembly, which reaffirmed the support of the international community to the African Initiative.

We support the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission in jointly appointing a special envoy, who will also be a guarantor of peace process on the ground and facilitate the effective implementation of the African Initiative, including by liaising with all partners of the Central African Republic and the region. That will, we hope, help to expedite the peace and reconciliation process in the Central African Republic. We also acknowledge the outcome of the recent consultations led by the President of the Republic of the Sudan, His Excellency President Omer Al-Bashir, and the declaration of commitment issued by the anti-Balaka militia, led by Maxime Mokom, and the ex-Séléka led by Noureddine Adam, towards peace in Central African Republic.

The role of MINUSCA remains indispensable, and we appreciate the Mission's efforts in fulfilling its mandated tasks under difficult circumstances. We strongly condemn the attacks against MINUSCA peacekeepers and other humanitarian actors operating on the ground. We pay tribute to those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of peace.

We are confident that the Security Council will continue to strengthen MINUSCA so as to enable it respond to the evolving situation on the ground. Particularly, the quick-reaction battle groups, the reserve battalion, the special forces company, the quick-reaction force company and its enabling units must be strengthened. In this regard, we note the outcome of the strategic review and support the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the review. The Mission's support to the Government-led local peace and reconciliation initiatives remains vital, and we note its contribution to reducing violence, building trust between communities and facilitating the return of internally displaced persons.

We therefore support the renewal of the mandate of the Mission and we look forward to constructively engaging in the upcoming discussions in this regard.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands) (*spoke in French*): Let me first thank the speakers for the clarity of their statements. Their suggestions are valuable in view of the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes the recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/922). I should like to join in the congratulations offered by the Ambassador of France on yesterday's inaugural session of the Special Criminal Court. The Court is essential to the fight against impunity.

Today, I would like to address three points: first, the peace process; secondly, the protection of civilians; and thirdly, security sector reform.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully supports the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. As President Touadera said before the General Assembly (see A/73/PV.9), it remains the only framework for peace negotiations in the Central African Republic. In recent months, we have considered how the United Nations could strengthen its support for the African Initiative. The invitation to join the panel of facilitators extended to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, and the announcement of the appointment of a Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the African Union mark important milestones. That encouraging development can only strengthen the momentum of the peace negotiations. The various stakeholders must now step up their efforts.

We call on the armed groups to lay down their arms. We remind them that the Council can apply sanctions against those who undermine peace. With a view to establishing lasting peace, we call on the Government to ensure the substantial participation of women in the negotiations. The commitment of the countries of the region is indispensable. We welcome the Sudan's efforts for peace in the Central African Republic, which are an integral part of the African Initiative. We encourage MINUSCA to strengthen its coordinating role in support of the political process, in line with the report of the Secretary-General.

My second point concerns the protection of civilians. This is a key task of MINUSCA in support of the Central African authorities. That task remains a challenge and will be particularly difficult if we do not give the Mission the equipment and the means to increase its mobility. At the same time, the Council needs to learn from its experience, positive or negative, in the area of operations. We committed to doing so in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

My third point concerns security sector reform. The Kingdom of the Netherlands commends the work of the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic and other partners that have contributed to the rehabilitation of the security forces. Sharing the same goal, all partners must cooperate in a coordinated and transparent way. We call on the authorities of the Central African Republic to contribute to that approach.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General's letter (S/2018/463) on the logistical support of MINUSCA to the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA). The first deployments of the FACA have yielded encouraging results. However, it lacks essential means, including basic equipment. MINUSCA has a vital role to play in preparing the FACA to resume the paramount task of protecting civilians. That support must be in accordance with the due diligence policy on human rights.

I will conclude by underlining that the moment is critical for the people of the Central African Republic. The humanitarian situation has deteriorated significantly. Half of the population has been displaced. Mistrust prevails, including towards the Mission. As the warring parties prepare to meet soon at the negotiating table, we remind them that they hold the key to a better future for the people of the Central African Republic.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first to thank Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, for his valuable briefing to the Council. I should also like to thank Mr. Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic; Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service; and the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), for their informative briefings.

In my statement, I shall address three issues related to our discussion today: the security situation, the humanitarian situation and the political situation.

First, as to the security situation, during our participation in the official visit to the Central African Republic, from 2 to 5 October, we observed a number of positive steps that had been taken at the security and political levels, despite the continued fragility of the security situation in the capital, Bangui, and in Kaga Bandoro, which was included in our visit. The security situation in general is unstable. Since the outbreak of violence in the Central African Republic in 2013 and 2014, the gravity of the situation has been exacerbated by acts of violence committed by armed groups and parties to the conflict and as a result of hate speech and incitement to religious and sectarian violence.

We would like to express our serious concern about the continued violations and attacks carried out by those extremist armed groups against United Nations personnel, members of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and humanitarian workers. We strongly condemn the attacks targeting Muslims and their religious symbols, setting fire to their homes and attacking places of worship, just as we condemn any attacks targeting people on the basis of their religion or place of worship, regardless of what party they belong to. We support the efforts by the Central African Republic authorities to halt such actions and to raise people's awareness in order to limit hate speech and consolidate the principle of peaceful coexistence among society's various sectors.

Strengthening justice in the Central African Republic will represent an important step forward for

the stability and security of the entire country. In that regard, we pay tribute to yesterday's inaugural formal session of the Special Criminal Court, which we hope will contribute to ending the culture of impunity and to bringing those who perpetrate crimes against civilians to justice. We also welcome the proposed appointment of a joint United Nations-African Union special envoy and the proposal to consolidate all African initiatives in support of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

Secondly, we regret that the humanitarian situation is still critical and that nearly half of the inhabitants of the Central African Republic require urgent humanitarian assistance. There are more than 616,000 internally displaced persons and 572,000 refugees living in neighbouring countries, making the Central African Republic one of the countries most in need of humanitarian assistance in the whole world. Even more worrying is the fact that many of those in need are women and children.

Thirdly, with regard to the political situation, the African Initiative, which enjoys a high level of acceptance among most of the political parties in the Central African Republic, is an essential pillar for a dialogue between the Government and the armed groups. We call on all the parties to participate in the dialogue process in order to resolve this prolonged conflict. In that regard, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the European Union, through its Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic, which handles the training of Central African armed forces. I would also like to salute the efforts deployed in the region with the aim of bringing the conflicting parties to the dialogue table within the African Initiative. They will help to achieve security if they can continue until the holding of presidential elections in 2020 and 2021, which we hope all segments of society will participate in, including young people and women.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore our support for extending MINUSCA's mandate for another year, until 15 November 2019. The Mission is an essential element in achieving the priorities of the Central African Republic — support for the political process, the protection of civilians, the creation of an environment that ensures access for humanitarian aid and support for the national armed forces. We also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to add two new tasks to the Mission's mandate — support for the electoral process and the provision of limited logistical support to the armed forces and internal security forces — as well as the recommendation on amending the Mission's role with regard to national resources. We sincerely appreciate the Special Representative's tireless efforts and pay tribute to all those working in MINUSCA.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to begin by thanking our briefers, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic, Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, and our colleague Ambassador Kacou Léon Adom for their insightful presentations.

Poland welcomes the fact that some positive progress has been made under the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, which remains the main framework for resolving the crisis in the Central African Republic. However, further efforts are needed to ensure that the achievements made so far are not lost. We call on all parties to the crisis to fully engage in dialogue and to fulfil their commitments.

While commending the support provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the African Union, as well as the engagement of regional and subregional actors in the mediation and reconciliation efforts, Poland emphasizes that consistency is key. To bring about real change, the political process must involve all political, social and ethnic groups, as well as women, and must be conducted at both the national and local levels. To that end, it is essential to ensure transparency in all actions undertaken by external actors. The country's political, administrative and judicial structures must be rebuilt and the sense of impunity in society reduced. It is critical to create closer links between the peace process and justice, and in that context we emphasize the importance of the elections planned for 2020 and 2021, which should provide the necessary impetus for implementing the processes of decentralization, establishing transitional justice and extending State authority.

At the same time, the efforts to overcome the political impasse and ensure the delivery of urgent

humanitarian aid should be complemented by long-term development programmes that address the root causes of the conflict and that include all groups from every side of the conflict.

Poland welcomes the redeployment in several areas of the country of the armed forces trained by the European Union Training Mission with MINUSCA's operational support, which is essential in order to reinforce national ownership and responsibility for the country's security. Nevertheless, the issue of logistical support to the national security forces must be urgently addressed. Poland would like to point out that all international partners providing assistance on the ground should work in a coordinated and transparent manner, which is the only way to achieve a unified approach to operationalizing the Central African Republic forces and ensuring their compliance with the highest standards. Considering the fragile situation in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA's priorities and core tasks remain valid. We value its engagement in supporting the political process, protecting civilians and ensuring a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid.

In conclusion, while we appreciate the achievements made so far, there is still a long road ahead for the Central African Republic. In our view, the international community and the country's people must stay the course in order to preserve what has already been accomplished. Poland supports the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/922). We commend the important work being done by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the European Union mission and other international partners in the Central African Republic. I would also like to assure Special Representative Onanga-Anyanga and his team of our full support.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic, Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, and Ambassador Léon Adom of Côte d'Ivoire for their briefings.

We share the concern expressed in the Secretary-General's report on the Central African Republic (S/2018/922) about the continuing unstable situation in the country, especially on the security front. A significant part of its territory is still controlled by armed groups. Despite some positive improvements regarding the issue of expanding State authority, the local Government bodies cannot fully carry out their functions.

We would like to express our sincere condolences for the peacekeepers who lost their lives this year. The courage of the Blue Helmets in the Central African Republic cannot be overestimated. We want to express our support for the efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and of Mr. Onanga-Anyanga personally. We realize that the Mission's task is not an easy one, considering the size of the country and the presence there of a large number of armed groups.

Russia, as a permanent member of the Security Council and a member of the International Support Group for the Central African Republic, intends to continue its full support to the process of national reconciliation that has begun there, acting in coordination with the authorities in Bangui, the African Union, the leadership of the Republic of the Sudan and the other stakeholders involved in the quest for ways to normalize the situation in the Central African Republic. We agree with the Secretary-General that the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is vital as a pathway to a political settlement. We support the comprehensive implementation of the road map for a Central African settlement adopted in Libreville on 17 July 2017 through the mediation of the African Union.

The progress made in implementing the African Initiative is a positive step, and we particularly welcome the talks held in the city of Bouar from 28 to 30 August by the Initiative's panel of facilitators with the representatives of 14 armed groups. We hope that the consolidated document that resulted will lead to an early start to a direct dialogue between the Government and the armed groups. We believe that the talks held on 28 August in Khartoum under the auspices of President Bashir of the Sudan between the leaders of the largest armed groups, including some formerly allied with the Séléka and anti-balaka, represent an important step within the framework of the general African effort to find ways to help the Central African Republic emerge from conflict.

The declaration signed at the conclusion of the meeting in Khartoum announced the creation of a united Central African opposition with the aim of achieving a lasting and sustainable peace in the Central African Republic, recording their commitment to the African Union Initiative, their willingness to start a peace process with the central Government and their obligation to respect human rights and ensure the free and safe movement of representatives of humanitarian and other non-governmental organizations throughout the country. We presume that such an association will enable them to reach concrete agreements with the Government of the Central African Republic.

As we have repeatedly emphasized, Russia supports harmonizing the various Central African Republic peace initiatives to help advance the negotiation process, which will help to prevent them from competing with one another, as the Secretary-General's report cautions against. Russia's assistance in organizing the contacts in Khartoum is in line with the efforts of the African community, which is making a decisive contribution to ending the stalemate in crisis situations on the African continent in accordance with the African Union's principle of African solutions to African problems. We consistently advocate for the backing of the international community and especially the Security Council for agreements that are being developed through the mediation of the African Union and other African bodies, and for providing them with political, moral and material support.

We note the steps that Bangui has taken in reforming the security sector with a view to regaining control over the entire country. Together with the support of the international community, they are designed to help normalize the situation in the Central African Republic and to implement the national defence plan approved by President Touadera with the aim of gradually transferring responsibility for the country's affairs to its lawful authorities. For our part, we affirm that Russia will continue to support the Central African Republic's authorities in reforming the national security sector, including in the area of strengthening the armed forces' combat capability and staff potential. Russian military specialists managed to achieve significant results in a short space of time in training more than 1,000 Central African troops. We also intend to continue to increase our assistance on the humanitarian front, particularly through the provision of medical services to the population. Our collaboration with the Central African Republic's legitimate authorities in rebuilding its national security forces is constructive and transparent, as testified to by the latest report of the Panel of Experts of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic and by the results of recent thorough inspections by United Nations representatives of a first batch of military equipment donated by Russia to the Central African Republic's Ministry of Defence at the beginning of this year. Besides that, we hope that our military and technical assistance to Bangui will cease to provoke what might be termed jealousy among our Council colleagues. We believe that in the current circumstances on the ground in the Central African Republic, constructive collaboration on the part of all international stakeholders is urgently needed.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I would like to thank all today's briefers for their valuable input and perspectives, and for their efforts to build peace in the Central African Republic. I would especially like to thank our colleague Ambassador Adom for his leadership on the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic.

We are encouraged by President Touadera's commitment to advancing the peace process, including at the recent high-level meeting during the general debate of the General Assembly. The country's national ownership and leadership are of course critical to progress. United, well-coordinated and transparent international support is now needed. We therefore fully support the African Union-led African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic as a framework for all international engagement. We also welcome the proposal to appoint a special envoy to lead the Initiative who would mobilize and coordinate regional and international engagement. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) should also have a strong role in supporting the process.

The African Initiative must become more inclusive in its approach, however. For instance, in its current composition there is no space for representatives of civil society. Women have key roles as mediators in local initiatives, and we believe there is potential for their increased participation in the African Initiative's panel of facilitators, as well as for women as parties to the dialogue. We encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as a new member of the panel,

together with Special Representative Nébié and others, to work to improve the inclusion of civil society, as well as the participation of women.

Progress in advancing the peace process is also important for stable and credible elections in 2020 and 2021. We support the Secretary-General's recommendation to include limited logistical support to the electoral process in the MINUSCA mandate. It is needed to strengthen capacity and ensure that the constitutional timeline can be met.

The security situation remains volatile. We are concerned about the continued widespread violence by armed groups, as well as targeted attacks on civilians and aid workers. Sexual and gender-based violence is increasingly used as a weapon of war, and women have become an expendable currency in the political economy of that war. The Council sent a strong signal earlier this year by making sexual and gender-based crimes a stand-alone designation criterion for the sanctions regime. That must now be effectively and actively implemented.

Like others, we commend and pay tribute to MINUSCA for its impressive efforts in a very challenging and often dangerous environment. Given the dire security situation, MINUSCA must be able to effectively exercise its core mandate to protect civilians and to do it increasingly in partnership with the national defence and internal security forces. There are good examples of that. The robust operations in the north-western province of Ouham-Pendé have led to a drop in attacks on civilians and the return of internally displaced persons. They have been based on a proactive approach by MINUSCA and coordinated with the activities of the Central African armed forces.

We therefore support the recommendation that MINUSCA should provide limited logistical support to national defence and security forces, enabling it to increase its footprint outside Bangui. Central African security forces must be fully and sustainably operationalized. A formal monitoring process should be put in place to ensure that MINUSCA's support is in full compliance with the United Nations Due Diligence Policy on Human Rights. The European Union (EU) and its Training Mission has already made important contributions in that regard. Trilateral efforts among the United Nations, the EU and the African Union can play a significant role in restoring peace and security in the country.

We welcome the efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions and the Secretary-General's new policy. However, we note with concern that nine new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded against MINUSCA forces during the reporting period. We expect that those cases will now be swiftly followed up, in accordance with agreed procedures.

With regard to the upcoming mandate review, we welcome the initiative by the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to provide observations to the Security Council, which include the importance of strengthened international support to the Government in its implementation of reforms and the advancement of the political peace process, and should now be duly considered in our review process. Transitional justice will play a critical role in the peacebuilding efforts. The people of the Central African Republic have repeatedly demanded that past grievances be addressed. We therefore welcome the progress made in establishing the Special Criminal Court and encourage further steps to secure financial support and political commitment for its functioning.

The humanitarian challenge in the Central African Republic is immense. As we have heard, half of the population is in need of assistance and only about a third of the humanitarian appeal has been funded. Additional funding is therefore urgently needed. We also need initiatives to combine development, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts for long-term sustainable peace.

In conclusion, we must remain mobilized and united in our efforts to support the Central African Republic. The situation remains fragile, and only by working together can we help the country achieve lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

My delegation thanks all of today's briefers, especially Ambassador Adom, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2018/922), the situation in the Central African Republic remains unstable due to the ongoing violence and insecurity perpetrated by armed groups. That instability hampers the country's development, capacity-building and State presence, despite progress

in protecting civilians, fostering inter-institutional cooperation and training the Central African Armed Forces, among other achievements.

My delegation commends the work of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, which fosters dialogue and addresses the root causes of instability and armed violence in the country. We call on all armed groups to join the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. We also highlight the need for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), together with the Government, to establish lasting strategic and operational partnerships with all relevant international and regional stakeholders. The new mandate must foster unity among international and regional partners on the importance of finding political solutions and inclusive national efforts, as well as strengthening the role of the International Support Group of the Central African Republic in bringing together all international actors in support of the peace process. The mandate must continue to underscore the importance of national ownership and take all population groups into account, including women and young people. It should also highlight the need for ongoing international support to the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and the Government authorities in order to accelerate the Plan's implementation and the coordination of peace efforts, particularly with regard to the African Initiative, the need to implement a national security policy and national security-sector reform strategy and the importance of strengthening justice institutions to combat impunity.

We commend the Mission on its efforts to identify the regions in which additional capacity is required to protect civilians and support the Government, to be provided through peace and reconciliation initiatives that can serve as frameworks for reducing violence, building trust among communities and facilitating the return of displaced persons. We urge MINUSCA to continue its efforts to advocate for the participation of women in the African Initiative and its work on community violence-reduction programmes, which have been effective in implementing local peace agreements and encouraging the voluntary disarming of a large number of young people involved in militia and armed-group activities.

In conclusion, we commend the active and ongoing support of regional and subregional organizations and the participation of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Initiative's panel of facilitators, whose political efforts to foster peace and cooperation are key to the reconciliation process. All efforts must be conducted with full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic. It is the people of the Central African Republic themselves who are primarily responsible for achieving peace and stability in their country.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): Since I am taking the floor for the first time during your presidency, Sir, on behalf of my delegation I would like to sincerely congratulate you on your thoughtful stewardship of the Council's work for the month of October.

As described in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/922), the situation in the Central African Republic remains a source of serious concern in the light of the clashes and attacks on civilians in the past few weeks. The briefings by Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mr. Bédializoun Moussa Nébié, Special Representative of the African Union to the Central African Republic, and Mr. Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa of the European External Action Service, included information that makes us realize that there are still many obstacles on the road ahead, despite the commendable progress that has been made in the quest for ways and means to achieve peace. The violent atmosphere created by the clashes between armed groups vying for control of land and access to natural resources shows that much remains to be done. As the report suggests, the continuing climate of instability created by the armed groups means that the risk of a relapse into crisis is still serious. However, thanks to the efforts under way in many different areas, we can hope for a future free of this fear.

I strongly support all of the report's recommendations and observations as well as other proposals such as

those of the Peacebuilding Commission. We feel we can legitimately hope that if these recommendations are implemented in drafting the resolution renewing MINUSCA's mandate, we have a real chance to make progress towards a sustainable settlement of the crisis in the Central African Republic. The briefings by the two Special Representatives highlighted every aspect of the crisis. What is important is ensuring that we faithfully heed the proposed recommendations and comments with a view to giving MINUSCA a more robust new mandate.

The Secretary-General's report clearly shows that my country is still a long way from regaining peace and stability, despite enormous efforts on the part of the international community, including the Member States represented here and the United Nations itself, through MINUSCA. I want to note that the Government has worked closely in every way with its partners and with MINUSCA in implementing political and security strategies aimed at defusing the crisis, without success. The report highlights shortcomings on the part of the Government, MINUSCA and partners in the provision of resources for implementing the policies and strategies we have devised.

MINUSCA alone cannot provide sustainable protection for civilians across the entire country. Training and equipping our national defence and security forces should be a top priority for our partners, given that the national authorities' resources are practically non-existent. In that regard, I would like to quote the Secretary-General in paragraph 66 of his report:

> "The peace process in the Central African Republic is contingent on security conditions conducive for dialogue. The effective negotiation and implementation of any outcome will need to be backed by credible, adequate and sustained military pressure to prevent any further strengthening or expansion of the armed groups."

That recommendation, together with the commitment of our partners to respecting my country's priorities in terms of peacebuilding, and to providing adequate resources to the United Nations system so that it can deliver on its agenda, can create the conditions we need to restore the peace and stability in the Central African Republic that we so desire.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the Security Council for their encouraging statements. We are particularly grateful to the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic for his leadership in managing the sanctions regime. My delegation looks forward eagerly to the important work of the French delegation in presenting us with a draft resolution adapted to the new tasks to be entrusted to MINUSCA and its Head of Mission.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite the members of the Council to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8379

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8379th meeting

Tuesday, 23 October 2018, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Sipaco Ribala
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Temenov
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mr. Cohen

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lowcock.

Mr. Lowcock: On 21 September, I warned the Council that we were losing the fight against famine in Yemen (see S/PV.8361). Since then, the situation has worsened. That is why, as required by resolution 2417 (2018), which the Council adopted in May, we issued the white note that was circulated late last week. In line with our obligations under the Council's resolution, my briefing today focuses on the risk of famine.

Famines are mercifully rare in the modern world. They used to be ubiquitous and a relatively common occurrence all over the world throughout more than 99 per cent of human history. It is actually a spectacular feature of progress in our era that only two famines have been declared in the past 20 years — the one that took the lives of a quarter of a million Somalis in 2011 and the famine declared last year that affected a few tens of thousands of people in South Sudan. It is that recent progress that makes what we now face in Yemen so shocking. A famine is declared when the three thresholds of food insecurity, acute malnutrition and mortality are all breached together. The three criteria are that at least one household in five faces an extreme lack of food, that more than 30 per cent of children under the age of five are suffering from acute malnutrition or wasting, and that at least two out of every 10,000 people are dying each and every day.

Assessments conducted a year ago identified 107 out of Yemen's 333 districts to be at risk of famine, where two of those three thresholds were either already exceeded or dangerously close to being so. A further assessment exercise is now under way across the country and the initial results are expected in mid-November. It has been more difficult to confirm the position on the third criteria — the number of deaths due to starvation or starvation-related disease. However, while mortality-related data is difficult to collect and triangulate, health workers are pointing to the rising number of deaths linked to food-related factors.

We also know that many deaths are hidden. Only half of the health facilities in Yemen are functioning and many Yemenis are too poor to access the ones that are open. Therefore, unable to reach care, people often simply die at home. Very few families report those deaths and the stories of those people go unrecorded. However, at the end of last year, one aid agency estimated that 130 children under the age of five were dying every day from extreme hunger and disease — nearly 50,000 little children during the course of the year. While we await the results of the assessments that are now under way, we already know that a further year of war and economic crisis have pushed millions more Yemenis towards famine.

So, just to be clear, my assessment and advice to the Council is that there is now a clear and present danger of an imminent and great big famine engulfing Yemen — much bigger than anything that any professionals in this field have seen during their working lives. Some people, perhaps including members of the Council, will be thinking, "Hang on a minute. They have told us this before and it did not happen". That is correct. We warned of famine in Yemen at the beginning of last year as part of the Secretary-General's call to action, which also flagged the risk in Somalia, South Sudan and north-eastern Nigeria. The response was a dramatic scaling up of the United Nations coordinated relief effort, which helped to mitigate the worst impact of the crisis at the time. I issued a similar warning when I briefed the Council on 8 November last year on the likely effect of the economic blockade that had just been imposed by the international coalition following missile attacks on Riyadh from inside Yemen. The blockade was removed and the supervised imports of food, fuel and medicines resumed through the Red Sea ports. What I am telling the Council today is that the situation is now much graver than on either of those two occasions.

Why is that? First, it is due to the sheer number of people at risk. In my update to the Council last month, I said that an additional 3.5 million people were likely to become severely food insecure in the months ahead, in addition to the 8 million that we were already reaching each month through the United Nations coordinated response effort. That is a total of 11 million people. That is what I said on 21 September. We now think that that estimate was wrong. Our revised assessment, which is the result of new survey work and analysis, is that the total number of people facing pre-famine conditions — meaning that they are entirely reliant on external aid for survival — could soon reach not 11 million, but 14 million. That is half of the total population of the country.

Secondly, beyond the sheer numbers, while millions of people have been surviving on emergency food assistance for years, the help that they get is enough merely to survive, not to thrive. The toll is unbearably high. The immune systems of the millions of people who have been on survival support for years on end are now literally collapsing, making them — especially children and the elderly — more likely to succumb to malnutrition, cholera and other diseases.

Last month, I explained the two recent developments that have deepened the crisis: first, the intensification of fighting around Al-Hudaydah, choking the lifeline that the aid operation and commercial imports rely on; and secondly, the recent further collapse of the economy. What has happened since then on those two issues? Fierce clashes continue in Al-Hudaydah, including intense fighting, shelling and air strikes in Al-Hudaydah city over the past several days. More than 570,000 people have been forced from their homes across the Al-Hudaydah governorate since fighting escalated in the end of June. Due to ongoing clashes, the eastern road from Al-Hudaydah city to Sana'a remains blocked, which impacts trade and convoys from the key ports that serve all the population centres of northern Yemen.

Clashes have also continued to block access to a milling facility that contains enough aid-financed grain to feed 3.7 million people for a month, and several humanitarian warehouses in the Al-Hudaydah area have now been occupied for over two months.

The parties to the conflict continue to violate international humanitarian law. Since late May, more than 5,000 separate violations have been recorded, including mass civilian casualties and destruction or damage to critical civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, electricity, water systems, markets, roads and bridges. Delays in issuing visas, restrictions on the importation of equipment and cargo, retractions of permits, interference in humanitarian assessment exercises, interference in monitoring and other obstructions all limit the ability of humanitarian agencies to provide life-saving assistance to innocent civilians. In the absence of a cessation of hostilities, especially around Al-Hudaydah, where fighting for more than four months now has damaged the key facilities and infrastructure on which the aid operation relies, the relief effort will ultimately be simply overwhelmed. The time surely has come for all parties to heed those warnings.

On the economy, the central problem, as I explained last month, is that Yemen is almost entirely reliant on imports for food, fuel and medicine. The available foreign exchange, from what little remains of oil exports, money sent home from Yemenis out of the country and international assistance, has been simply inadequate to finance adequate levels of import to support the population. Since 2015, the gross domestic product — the national income of Yemen — has shrunk by 50 per cent. More than 600,000 jobs have been lost and hundreds of thousands of civil servants and pensioners have not received regular payment since 2016. More than 1.5 million families are no longer receiving support through public safety nets and more than 80 per cent of Yemenis now live below the poverty line.

The collapse in the domestic economy has been partially — but only partially — mitigated by aid efforts, including generous funding this year from the Gulf, the United States, European countries and other donors, and that has allowed the United Nations and its partners to dramatically scale up relief efforts. Aid agencies continue to implement the world's largest humanitarian relief operation in Yemen. More than 200 organizations are working through the United Nations humanitarian response plan, and we have delivered assistance to each and every one of Yemen's 333 districts this year. As many as 8 million people a month are receiving life-saving assistance under the programme. But because the aid operation cannot conceivably meet the needs of all Yemenis, I called last month for an urgent and substantial injection of foreign exchange and the resumption of payments to pensioners

and key public sector workers, such as teachers and health professionals.

There have been constructive discussions on both those issues and indications of further support, especially from Gulf countries. Today's announcement that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will provide $70 million to cover allowances for 135,000 teachers all over the country is important. However, I fear that overall action in those areas still looks to be both too small and too slow to reverse the trajectory towards famine, so my plea is that those concerned address that as a matter of great urgency.

At the same time, the Government of Yemen appears to be planning further restrictions on traders importing essential commodities. Traders trying to import six key commodities — wheat, rice, sugar, milk, cooking oil and fuel derivatives — are now being told that, as a result of new Government regulations, they must secure lines of credit from the Central Bank. But only a handful of lines of credit have been issued since June, most of them in just the past few days. The enforcement of those regulations is already having an alarming effect. Two vessels carrying more than 29,000 metric tons of fuel have, at the Government's request, been refused entry into Yemen in recent days. Last month I described the impact of desperate fuel shortages. If current trends continue, water services and sanitation facilities will inevitably be either curtailed or cut off altogether.

The Government has announced that it intends to extend enforcement of the new regulations to food imports starting 9 November. Unless steps are taken to expedite the process or waive those planned new requirements, imports of key food commodities and fuel could, in our assessment, fall by one half. That would, for reasons I have already explained, be the death knell for countless innocent civilians, most of them women and children. Therefore, I call on all stakeholders to do everything possible to avert catastrophe. We urgently seek the support of the Council for action in five areas.

First, there must be a cessation of hostilities in and around all the infrastructure and facilities on which the aid operation and commercial importers rely. A humanitarian ceasefire would reflect the obligations of the parties to the conflict to uphold international humanitarian law and to do everything possible to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. As we have previously made clear, the United Nations is ready to play an enhanced role in ensuring the appropriate use of key facilities, especially around Al-Hudaydah.

Secondly, we must protect the supply of food and essential goods across the country. Humanitarian and commercial imports must flow into all ports and onwards to their final destinations. That means lifting existing and planned restrictions on imports and keeping the main transport routes open and safe.

Thirdly, there needs to be a larger and faster injection of foreign exchange into the economy through the Central Bank, along with expediting credit for traders and the payment of pensioners and civil servants.

Fourthly, there must be an increase in funding and support for the humanitarian operation. Given projected increases in needs — potentially up to 14 million people, as I have said — and the inevitable lead times, aid agencies need additional resources now to start scaling up relief efforts.

Fifthly, with so many lives at stake, we call upon the belligerents to seize this moment to engage fully and openly with the Special Envoy to end the conflict. He and I talk about these issues all the time, and we have discussed the five asks I have set out before members of the Council today.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Lowcock for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I apologize to Mark Lowcock that a previous engagement delayed my arrival to the Chamber, but I thank him very much for another sobering briefing. It is very good that the United Nations can report swiftly to the Council, in line with resolution 2417 (2018), whenever the risk of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity in armed conflict contexts occur. In resolution 2417 (2018), the Council expressed its intention to give its full attention to such information that the Secretary-General provides, and as we on the Council all know, Yemen has been one of those issues that the Council follows very deeply and about which it is gravely concerned. I am pleased to see that the Ambassador has joined us today.

The numbers that Mark Lowcock has cited are truly horrifying. The scale is a very grave concern, and the fact that the crisis does not seem to be getting

better is also something that the Council needs to take a deep interest in. I will not repeat the figures, but the fact that they are in the millions ought to be very salutary for us to think about, and in particular the acute malnourishment of nearly 2 million children under the age of five is a warning call. I understand that nearly 400,000 of those children suffer from severe acute malnutrition. That is a life-threatening condition and it requires urgent treatment.

The highest number of severe acute malnutrition cases is in Al-Hudaydah governorate, where there are appropriateoximately 100,000 cases. After air strikes in late July resulted in damage to the main sanitation facility and water supply, suspected cholera cases almost doubled, and that of course increases the risk of a new wave of cholera. Only the humanitarian response is containing an outbreak like last year's and a further disruption of humanitarian operations could have, as Mark said, catastrophic consequences.

Mark asked for increased funding and more support to humanitarian operations. The efforts of the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are welcome. As for the United Kingdom, we are determined to play our part. On World Food Day, 16 October, the United Kingdom announced a package of over $125 million, which we hope will help UNICEF tackle malnutrition in Yemen. But funding alone will not be enough to address the growing risk of famine. We need urgent action on the part of all parties on the economy, imports and access, and the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure. I want to highlight four issues in particular.

First, with regard to the economy, we share the concern about the rapid depreciation of the Yemeni rial. Soaring prices are putting several basic commodities out of reach for many Yemenis, and the Central Bank is struggling to pay public sector salaries. We look to the Government of Yemen and the Central Bank to take urgent action to stabilize the rial, for example by issuing promised letters of credit to Yemeni commercial food importers. Until that happens, we also suggest that the Government of Yemen pause the implementation of Decree 75, which is preventing staple goods, such as wheat, cooking oil and rice, from getting into the country at a time when they are most needed.

Secondly, unhindered access for commercial and humanitarian food and fuel into and throughout Yemen is essential if famine is to be avoided. The conflict is cutting off important transport routes, including the main route between Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a, and alternatives have become more congested and more vulnerable. For their part, the Houthis should stop interfering with the humanitarian response so that food, fuel and medicines can reach those most in need throughout the north.

Thirdly, it is essential that military operations be conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law. This includes the protection of civilians and the protection of civilian infrastructure. We have consistently made this clear in the Council, but I repeat it again today. Not only is it important that military operations proceed with regard to the principles of proportionality, precaution and distinction, but it is also the case that further damage to food infrastructure, such as mills and wheat silos, threatens already fragile food supplies.

Fourthly and lastly, as we have made clear, only a political settlement will enable the worsening humanitarian crisis to be properly addressed and will bring long-term stability to Yemen. We call on all parties once again to engage constructively and in good faith with the Special Envoy's efforts to bring about a political settlement. We look forward to hearing from Martin Griffiths again in the Council. We last heard from him on 11 September (see S/PV.8348) following disappointing news from Geneva. We support his efforts, which have continued since then, and we look forward to further updates in the coming weeks on progress towards reaching agreement between the parties on confidence-building measures and a broader framework agreement.

With regard to the four points that Mark made — some of which I have covered now — I think they deserve very urgent consideration by the Council.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mark Lowcock, for his briefing to the Council on the latest developments pertaining to the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

I will focus in my statement on two issues: developments in the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and political and security developments.

First, with regard to developments in the humanitarian situation, we are greatly concerned by warning of the imminent danger of food insecurity in

Yemen, as detailed by Mr. Lowcock in his briefing. More than 3.5 million of our Yemenis brothers are facing the threat of food insecurity. The continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen is the inevitable result of the ongoing armed conflict, which affects the economy sector first and foremost. In the light of the non-payment of salaries and the unprecedented depreciation of the Yemeni rial against foreign currencies, the international community has a major responsibility to support the Yemeni Government in order to ensure that it succeeds in stopping the depreciation of the national currency.

The international community must also support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, including confidence-building measures, to unify the Yemeni financial institutions, the foremost of which is the Central Bank, with a view to establishing new mechanisms to collect revenues from different Yemeni regions in order to pay the salaries, which undoubtedly would help to alleviate humanitarian suffering.

In that regard, we commend the support provided recently by the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Yemeni Central Bank through its deposit of $200 million, thereby increasing its total deposits to approximately $3.2 billion. In addition, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with the United Arab Emirates, has also provided $70 million to support the payment of teacher salaries in Yemen, in coordination with UNICEF.

Secondly, with regard to political and security developments, our meeting today to discuss the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen is an expected result of the coup against the legitimate Government of Yemen, led by the Houthis, who took control of most State institutions by military force. The Houthis have refused to cooperate with any political effort to end the crisis, as seen recently by their absence from the consultations that were supposed to take place in Geneva on 6 September and were fully supported by the Council.

The Houthis also continue to deliberately obstruct humanitarian assistance through seizures and looting. The Houthis have confiscated more than 690 relief trucks and more than 15,000 food baskets, and detained and stopped 84 oil and food vessels. As Mr. Lowcock said, the Houthis have also taken control of humanitarian warehouses in Al-Hudaydah.

In addition, the Houthis have taken control of Al-Hudaydah city and port and transformed them into a military operations zone, thereby preventing safe access to the grain silos and threatening to disrupt international navigation. The Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) has condemned Houthi attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea and confirmed that such attacks violate international humanitarian law and may seriously affect access to humanitarian assistance and routes of commercial shipments.

We reiterate that the State of Kuwait stands ready to support and facilitate all international efforts aimed at prioritizing the political solution based on resolutions of international legitimacy. We also stand ready to facilitate the work of the Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, and his ongoing efforts in order to gather all Yemeni parties at the dialogue table despite the security challenges, including the Houthi threat to regional peace and security posed by the targeting of the territories of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with nearly 250 ballistic missiles and 67,000 explosive projectiles.

In conclusion, we underscore our support for the efforts of the Special Envoy. Any effort to end the crisis in Yemen must be based on a political solution in accordance with the three terms of reference: the Gulf Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the national dialogue and the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2216 (2015), while ensuring the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Yemen and non-interference in its internal affairs.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for his briefing. We are grateful to him and his team for their work to ease the humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

China expresses its condolences to the Yemeni victims of tropical cyclone Luban and extends its sincere sympathy to their families. We wish a speedy recovery to all who are injured.

Against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict in locations such as Al-Hudaydah, the humanitarian crisis in Yemen has worsened and the suffering of the people has increased. Despite the firm support of the international community, overall economic and social conditions in Yemen have continued to deteriorate. Basic public services such as medical care are dwindling. Food and

fuel prices, which affect people's livelihood, are on the rise and the threat of famine looms ever larger. Armed conflicts have increased civilian casualties, destroyed infrastructure and impeded access to humanitarian assistance — a situation that has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. The international community must take action with a view to alleviating the current grave humanitarian situation in Yemen. China would like to make the following points.

First, the parties to the conflict should create conditions for easing the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We urge them to abide by international law, cease hostilities, provide effective, safe and timely access for the delivery of humanitarian supplies, and guarantee the normal movement of commercial items. That will help to stabilize prices and ensure the timely distribution of humanitarian relief, thereby meeting the basic needs of the Yemeni people.

Secondly, the international community should continue to increase humanitarian assistance and provide medicine, food and other materials in a targeted manner to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. We appreciate the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Food Programme and other agencies to reduce the threat of cholera and famine, including the WHO delivery of cholera vaccines to more than half a million Yemenis in early October.

Thirdly, advancing the political process is the only fundamental and lasting solution to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The international community should step up its support for the mediation efforts of the United Nations and Special Envoy Griffiths to jointly push the parties to set aside their differences, pursue de-escalation, adopt confidence-building measures, such as releasing prisoners, relaunch face-to-face political dialogue as soon as possible, and establish a sustainable negotiation process.

In recent years, China has provided several tranches of assistance to Yemen, including food and medical supplies, through bilateral channels and in cooperation with international agencies. In July, President Xi Jinping announced a new assistance initiative for Yemen at the eighth ministerial meeting of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum. China will actively honour its commitments to helping alleviate the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We will continue to provide assistance to the Yemeni people to the best of our ability.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the United Kingdom for having taken the initiative of convening this meeting in the extremely deteriorated humanitarian context of which we are all aware and which Mr. Lowcock has just described. His warnings and expectations are very clear, and we must all act with a sense of urgency in the light of what he told us. For months, we have seen the ongoing deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. War, extreme poverty and economic collapse have created such a high degree of systemic weakness of society and the State that we are today at the brink of catastrophe.

Since our last meeting in the Council a month ago (see S/PV.8361), the situation has been exacerbated by the continued fall of the rial, the ongoing fighting in Al-Hudaydah and a decline in the amount of foodstuffs unloaded in Al-Hudaydah since September. In addition, in the south-eastern province of Al-Mahrah, there was damage caused by tropical cyclone Luban. The result, as the Special Envoy described, is a risk of widespread famine that could affect more than 22 million people, a large-scale cholera epidemic and the possibility that several generations of Yemenis will be deprived of an education.

Secondly, in this extremely difficult situation, we must pursue our efforts to ensure respect of international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians, and humanitarian and commercial access and delivery, as well as to promote the recovery of the Yemeni economy. Those points are included in the Council's 21 September presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/18) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We must implement them in Yemen. Two immediate concrete goals are to ensure the protection of civilians from bombing and artillery fire, particularly in a city as densely populated as Al-Hudaydah, and to allow civilians to move freely and safely. Civilian infrastructure must also be protected.

We must continue to strive to achieve other goals often mentioned in the Council.

First, we must protect humanitarian personnel, including those working in the rapid response mechanisms in Al-Hudaydah province and elsewhere in Yemen, who operate in a very dangerous environment. They must be able to plan their operations in advance and implement them safely. I once again convey to them the full support and admiration of France.

Secondly, humanitarian and commercial access must be ensured. The ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef must remain open and accommodate at least as many essential commodities — including food and fuel — as they did before December 2017. A solution is urgently needed so that the World Food Programme can access silos containing essential foods for the population and then transport them to Al-Hudaydah province and the rest of the country. The same is true for fuel. The main artery between Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a must remain accessible, and we call on the parties to do everything in their power in that regard.

Finally, it is essential to intensify efforts to contain the soaring inflation of prices for food items, the collapse of the rial, and the lack of compensation for a large majority of Yemenis. There is an urgent need for progress in the negotiations led by the Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, with the Yemeni Government and the Houthi rebels on this topic, particularly with regard to the restoration of the Yemeni Central Bank. The work of the international financial institutions must also continue to make the recovery of the banking and financial system feasible.

In that context — and I will conclude here — France reiterates its call on the parties to engage fully with the Special Envoy in order to reopen the dialogue and move the political process forward. We know that only a political solution will make it possible to put a permanent end to the suffering of the Yemeni people. The search for that solution is becoming more and more urgent every day. United Nations mediation is the only way to revive discussions with a view to reaching an agreement on the management of the port of Al-Hudaydah, resuming talks, achieving a durable cessation of hostilities and defining the parameters for a political solution.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First, let me thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for his sobering and concerning briefing. Let me also thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for its efforts on the ground and for its initiative in providing the Council with a warning on the increased threat of conflict-induced famine in Yemen.

OCHA's warning and this meeting of the Council are directly based on resolution 2417 (2018), on conflict and hunger, adopted earlier this year. OCHA's warning comes at a crucial point in time, when, following this summer's escalation of violence, the number of civilians killed in hostilities every month has almost tripled; when an economic depression is pushing millions people further below the poverty line; when cyclones threaten the lives of already extremely vulnerable civilians in Yemen; and when the Council's efforts to end the terrible conflict have proven to be insufficient.

Last week we hosted a photo exhibit in this building, with pictures of victims of conflict and hunger. Two severely malnourished babies from Yemen were among the victims shown. Those were two faces behind the staggering statistic of 172,000 severely malnourished children in Yemen. In that context, I will address three issues today: first, the threat of conflict-induced famine; secondly, the constraints on humanitarian access; and thirdly, the need for compliance with international humanitarian law.

With regard to my first point, Yemen is a clear example of the relationship between conflict and hunger. The reality of the more than 11 million Yemenis on the brink of famine is entirely man-made. The OCHA white paper on the increased threat of famine is a good example of the early warning we need to prevent a full-blown famine in Yemen, although in fairness, as Mark Lowcock said, this is not the first time the humanitarian community has warned us of the situation we are now facing. When the Council recognized the need to break the vicious cycle between armed conflict and food insecurity with the adoption of resolution 2417 (2018), it also committed itself to action. The Council committed itself to addressing those mad-made crises by enforcing man-made solutions. The parties to the conflict must take immediate steps and it is up to the international community, including the Council, to make sure that they follow through.

My second point concerns the persisting humanitarian access constraints the parties need to address. One month ago, OCHA provided the Council with concrete asks to all parties to the conflict that would help avert a famine. It is unconscionable that, since then, no discernible action has been taken by the parties involved. Today, let me be all the more clear about what we expect of the warring parties. Houthi-affiliated militia need to immediately abandon all humanitarian warehouses they have occupied for the past two months in Al-Hudaydah. The Yemeni Government needs to address with the utmost urgency the import delays caused by Decree 75 before imports of essential commodities decrease even further. Despite

clearances by the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism, three essential fuel shipments were delayed in reaching Al-Hudaydah in recent weeks. Those delays must stop. The coalition needs to remove unnecessary commercial import restrictions, which have resulted in container shipments no longer serving Al-Hudaydah port since last year's blockade. Al-Hudaydah port should be open and fully functional. The Council has stated that repeatedly. The road connecting Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a needs to be open to humanitarian goods. We need a humanitarian ceasefire on the ground, as Mr. Lowcock requested. So far, the Council has been unified. Let us all unite behind the five asks Mr. Lowcock mentioned today.

That brings me to my third point — compliance with international humanitarian law. The conduct of hostilities continues to be a major contributing factor to the humanitarian crisis. Air strikes and shelling have killed scores of civilians. They have also hit hospitals and water sanitation facilities that Yemenis depend on for clean drinking water and to prevent cholera and other diseases. Reports of both the Panel of Experts on Yemen and the Group of Eminent Experts on Yemen have highlighted the many transgressions by all parties to the conflict. In the absence of an end to the violence, their reporting continues to be crucial. We call on all parties to cooperate with them and allow them unimpeded access. Accountability is an essential ingredient for a peaceful and stable Yemen.

In conclusion, we call on the parties to take urgent steps to alleviate the humanitarian crisis by implementing OCHA's asks before it is too late. Humanitarian actors on the ground warn us that anything short of a halt to hostilities may still be insufficient to avert a famine. We call on the parties to cease hostilities around humanitarian and commercial infrastructure, remove all access constraints and de-escalate. We further call on them to engage with the Special Envoy without preconditions.

Martin Griffiths' efforts towards a political solution continue to have our full support. The parties must shoulder their responsibility. If not, the Council, bearing in mind its commitment laid down in resolution 2417 (2018), must consider further steps. We need immediate and concrete action. Millions of lives depend on it. The people of Yemen depend on it. The children of Yemen depend on it.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Mark Lowcock for his very objective, yet alarming, briefing. We would like to express our gratitude for his efforts, his team and the activities of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Yemen.

I would also like to thank the United Kingdom for taking the initiative to convene this very timely meeting. It demonstrates the desperate urgency of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. We have observed the continued deterioration of the living conditions of the Yemeni population, as just described by Mr. Lowcock. The situation of civilians is getting worse day by day, as Yemen is now on the brink of the worst famine. We are appalled by reports estimating that up to 4 million more Yemenis may become severely food insecure by the end of the year if conditions do not improve. The country may also face a new wave of the cholera epidemic, as the number of suspected cases has increased. The dire situation of Yemeni civilians continues to be exacerbated by the escalation of hostilities and attacks on civilian infrastructure.

We believe that the highly alarming situation of children in Yemen requires the special attention of the Council. Every 10 minutes a Yemeni child dies from entirely preventable war-related causes, and thousands have already been killed or injured as a result of conflict. Currently, almost every child in Yemen is in need of aid and, according to recent estimates, an additional 1 million children are now at risk of descending into famine. Those numbers are deeply disturbing and horrifying. We urge all parties to the conflict, as well as those with influence over them, to take immediate action to save Yemeni children from hunger and the atrocities of war.

We are also alarmed by the escalation of fighting in and around Al-Hudaydah, where an increase in air strikes, naval and ground shelling has resulted in scores of civilian casualties as well as damage to civilian infrastructure. The intensification of hostilities in Al-Hudaydah poses a major threat not only to the city and its inhabitants, but also to the critical lifeline for humanitarian assistance. The disruption of the strategic supply chain leading through Al-Hudaydah would have disastrous humanitarian consequences for millions of people across the country. It is therefore crucial to maintain the full functioning of the port and to ensure that all roads leading from Al-Hudaydah are accessible in order to enable basic commodities to be delivered.

The collapse of the economy and State structures is yet another factor contributing to the further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen. As a result of the rapid devaluation of the Yemeni rial, prices of basic commodities are skyrocketing and the purchasing power of millions of people is falling. Could any of us imagine being forced to live on less than $1 a day? In the light of such a tragic humanitarian situation, I would like to point to the provisions of the presidential statement adopted in March (S/PRST/2018/5) by the Council and to recall four important points. First, concrete steps must be taken to de-escalate the fighting and establish a durable cessation of hostilities. Secondly, safe and unhindered humanitarian access must be ensured. Thirdly, international humanitarian law must be respected and the protection of civilians ensured at all times. Lastly, immediate measures need to be taken to stabilize the economy and support the exchange rate. These issues are still very urgent.

In conclusion, the Council bears the responsibility for the situation in Yemen. It is time to take concrete action in order to bring the conflict to an end. We must stand united in our call to the parties to step up their engagement in an inclusive, United Nations-led political process without preconditions, so that a peaceful solution can soon be reached for the sake of the Yemeni people.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the United Kingdom delegation for initiating today's meeting. The situation in Yemen merits the Security Council's close attention. Mr. Lowcock has given us a depressing briefing on the situation in Yemen, where the world's worst humanitarian crisis is unfolding.

This is a structural crisis. It has done irreparable damage to the country's economy and population. The Emergency Relief Coordinator's dry statistics cannot convey the full force of the critical situation in Yemen. A majority of the population is in need of one or another kind of assistance. Millions of Yemenis are starving and have no access to essential medical services or medicines. The country is once again in the grip of a cholera epidemic. Getting humanitarian aid to Yemenis should be one of our priorities and should be provided on a non-discriminatory basis, regardless of who controls the territory where they live.

We call for a comprehensive cessation of the violence. We condemn the indiscriminate strikes on civilian targets. We advocate ensuring unconditional compliance with the provisions of international humanitarian law and unfettered humanitarian access to all parts of the country. In order to achieve that, it will be essential to keep all of Yemen's seaports, including Al-Hudaydah and Saleef, as well as its airports, including Sana'a, open and functioning. It is important to ensure that there are no obstacles to the unimpeded movement of humanitarian and commercial goods traffic along the main routes linking the coast with the north of the country, where a major part of the population lives. Russia will continue to provide unpoliticized humanitarian assistance to Yemenis in both the north and south. We intend to continue working on a bilateral and multilateral basis, including through our regular contributions to the budget of the World Food Programme.

We operate on the principled position that it is impossible to improve the situation in Yemen through humanitarian measures alone and that a political solution is essential. The Security Council cannot remain indifferent to the suffering of the Yemeni people and must work to influence the parties to the conflict, with the aim of achieving a rapid resumption of negotiations and agreeing on a ceasefire formula from which a sustainable political process can emerge. We support the mediation efforts of Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and believe that his initiative for launching the negotiation process is important. He continues to be in contact with all of the players involved through shuttle diplomacy. We are convinced that reaching agreement, particularly with regard to confidence-building measures, is still possible. We call on all parties to show restraint and refrain from resorting to force. The history of the conflict in Yemen has shown that militaristic approaches do not work. Maintaining calm around Al-Hudaydah and halting offensive actions should help Mr. Griffiths succeed. For our part, we will continue to assist the Special Envoy through our contacts with all of the stakeholders in the conflict, encouraging them to become actively involved in the United Nations mediation efforts.

In conclusion, we want to emphasize once again that whether we are talking about the Yemeni conflict or conflicts in other trouble spots in the region, these are all the result of the lack of a comprehensive and indivisible security architecture in the Middle East for both the Arab States in the Persian Gulf and Iran. Russia has long advocated for an initiative establishing

that architecture, which would enable us to exchange the current climate of threats and confrontation for one of dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): We would like to express our profound appreciation to the United Nations and its humanitarian partners for their untiring efforts to provide life-saving assistance in Yemen under extremely challenging conditions. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock for his briefing on those activities and to express our gratitude to the United Kingdom for calling for this essential meeting.

There can be no doubt that the humanitarian situation in Yemen and the suffering of the Yemeni people is still exceptionally worrying. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has noted that armed conflicts have intensified in Al-Hudaydah governorate, resulting in civilians being killed, injured or displaced, and in the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Overland access to the city of Al-Hudaydah remains limited, which affects humanitarian operations. Its port is vital to humanitarian aid, and it must remain open and functional. The extremely difficult humanitarian conditions have been further exacerbated by the rapid depreciation of the local currency, and the continued economic decline is pushing millions of Yemenis close to famine.

Already 75 per cent of the population requires food assistance. The non-payment of salaries has affected the already crumbling health service, increasing the probability of a major cholera epidemic. Thousands of people have been affected by the severe weather caused by Tropical Cyclone Luban. The situation has now amounted to the worst and biggest humanitarian crisis in the world today. All the reports and figures from the United Nations and humanitarian agencies warn that unless urgent and concerted efforts are taken, the already devastating humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate. In the meantime, we welcome today's announcement by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia that they will provide $70 million through UNICEF to pay teachers' salaries.

There are no options left. All parties must fully cooperate with the United Nations and its humanitarian partners so that much-needed aid reaches all of those in need. Safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access remains absolutely vital. The use of the port of Al-Hudaydah is critical, and the protection of civilians and civilian facilities must be given high priority.

For the sake of the surviving civilians, who have endured so much, we strongly appeal to all parties to exercise maximum restraint, according to established international humanitarian law. The international community should take urgent and coordinated action to address the distortions in the Yemeni economy. All of those measures are of major importance, but they will not be sufficient to sustainably address the unfolding humanitarian tragedy. The deep-rooted crisis in Yemen demands far more, most urgently, namely, a comprehensive political solution that addresses both the suffering of Yemenis and the concerns of the countries of the region. In that context, diplomacy must provide the prime response to finding a durable political solution, while respecting the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen.

It is very clear that the Yemeni crisis can be resolved only through a Yemeni-led and Yemeni-owned process, facilitated by the United Nations. We fully support the continued diplomatic efforts of Special Envoy Griffiths. We call upon all parties to constructively engage with the Special Envoy to fully reinvigorate the political process. The Council should also make clear its continued, full and comprehensive support for his tireless efforts.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for convening this meeting, and Mr. Lowcock for once again informing us about the devastating situation in Yemen.

We reiterate our deep regret at the continuation of the conflict in Yemen. Far from a non-existent military solution, the actions of the parties and their contempt for international law and international humanitarian law have aggravated what is already the worst humanitarian crisis in the world today. We are facing the clear failure of the Security Council to fulfil its responsibilities of maintaining international peace and security and protecting 22 million vulnerable Yemenis.

The continuous bombings and terrorist attacks are compounded by recurring outbreaks of cholera and the worst famine that the world has seen in the past 100 years. Girls and boys are the most vulnerable and are the main victims of the conflict and the humanitarian crisis. It is estimated that thousands of children under the age of five could die as a result of malnutrition and disease in the remainder of the year alone. We believe that their abandonment by the international community

fosters the development of violent extremism that leads to terrorism.

Peru condemns the Houthi rebels and their crimes, including indiscriminate attacks against urban centres in Saudi Arabia, for which they will be held accountable. We also condemn the attacks carried out by members of the coalition against civilians and vital civilian infrastructure for dealing with cholera outbreaks. We are still awaiting the transparent and credible investigation requested by the Council to identify, prosecute and punish those responsible for the bombing of a bus that killed dozens of children last August. Impunity is not acceptable.

We note with alarm the prospect of an escalation in the city and port of Al-Hudaydah, which could further restrict access to the food, medicine and fuel required to meet humanitarian needs. Only one vessel carrying containers has entered that port since November of last year. We reiterate that ports, airports and land routes must remain open and operational, as provided for in the Council's presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/5) in March. Likewise, humanitarian aid and the population's access to such aid cannot and should not be conditioned by any military objective.

In view of that, we reiterate our support for the efforts of Mr. Martin Griffiths, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to restore dialogue among the parties. We also wish to convey, through Mr. Lowcock, our support for the humanitarian work of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies, whose capacities are overstretched by the scale of the humanitarian crisis. As has been noted, the battle against famine is being lost. In that context, it is vital that the international community also contribute to financing humanitarian activities, controlling inflation and stabilizing the local currency, facilitating the imports of basic goods and kick-starting the economy.

I conclude by noting that Council members, in particular those with influence over the parties, can and should do more to protect the population without resorting to double standards or strategic considerations. Peru emphasizes the urgent need for a cessation of hostilities that allows free access to food and humanitarian aid, as well as the need for the Yemeni parties to negotiate a political solution. The time to act is now. We cannot continue to be passive bystanders to this tragedy.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Allow me to start by expressing our condolences and sympathies to the Government and the people of Yemen following the devastating tropical cyclone.

I also want to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock for his update and for having drawn our attention to the acute food crisis — indeed famine — in Yemen, as foreseen in resolution 2417 (2018). Mark Lowcock and the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Lise Grande, have our wholehearted support in their efforts, as do all United Nations personnel and humanitarians in Yemen, who are working under what we understand are extremely challenging and difficult circumstances.

I want to focus mainly on the economic crisis and the military escalation in Yemen — two factors that are aggravating the humanitarian disaster that has been the predictable, but not inevitable, effect of the conflict being played out in Yemen.

First, on the economy, the numbers presented today are staggering. As we have heard, if the current economic crisis continues, an additional 5.6 million people could risk severe food insecurity in the coming months. That would add to the individual catastrophe of millions and bring the total number of people in pre-famine conditions to 14 million. That famine is the result of a man-made situation that occurred before our eyes and on our watch.

To help reverse those trends, we support Mr. Lowcock's call today for urgent measures to stabilize the Yemeni economy. Those include expanding liquidity to stabilize the currency, expediting applications for lines of credit for importers of core commodities and holding back on restrictions in that area, and ensuring the payment of civil servants — teachers as a first step — as well as pensioners in the northern part of the country. We welcome today's announcement that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will provide teacher allowances across the country, and we heard Mr. Lowcock's further recommendations in that area.

However, and turning now to my second point, on the military escalation, those economic measures are far from enough. The economic collapse and food security crisis is not happening in a vacuum; it is a direct consequence of the ongoing conflict and is aggravated by the current military escalation. That connection is painfully apparent in Al-Hudaydah, where the fighting is not only causing civilian casualties but is also affecting both aid operations and commercial imports.

We remain particularly concerned about the continued fighting on the main road to Sana'a, as it is impacting the vital supply chain and life-line to northern Yemen, as well as the occupation of humanitarian warehouses and the blocked access to the vital milling facility.

The Security Council has once again today been put on high alert, and we have a responsibility to respond. Based on resolution 2417 (2018), which addresses conflict-induced food insecurity, and as agreed in our presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/5) earlier this year, it is now time to come together and make equally critical and urgent demands. First, a durable ceasefire is needed, at least for the purpose set out by Mr. Lowcock. Secondly, we must provide safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need, with ports and key roads kept open and functioning, including Al-Hudaydah and Saleef. Commercial imports should also be maintained and expanded to reach all ports. Thirdly, there must be respect for international humanitarian law in all circumstances, including by protecting civilians, medical, humanitarian and United Nations personnel across the country and meeting the basic needs of the civilian population. Fourthly, the Council should urgently call in good faith on the parties to engage in a United Nations-led inclusive political process.

As a Council, we should step up our efforts to support Mr. Griffiths in his commendable efforts. If we are serious about our constant call that there is no military solution to the conflict in Yemen, then only through a negotiated political solution will this war and the immense suffering that it has caused the people of Yemen come to an end.

Mr. Sipaco Ribala (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for requesting the convening of this meeting on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, as well as Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, for the detailed briefing that he just delivered.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea reiterates its concern stated barely one month ago (see S/PV.8361) about the hostilities that the Yemeni people are suffering, hostilities that are increasingly exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Three years of uninterrupted conflict and the consequent economic decline have exhausted coping mechanisms and the livelihoods of the population, thereby exerting enormous pressure on the institutions that provide essential basic services, causing irregularities and interruptions in salary payments and interrupting the provision of operating costs for social facilities.

Approximately 1.25 million civil servants have not received wages, or have only received them intermittently, since August 2016. It is estimated that that wage gap is affecting one quarter of the population, including public officials and their families, leaving them without a regular income at a time of scarcity and rising prices, according to a report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

There is an urgent need for the international community to find a support strategy to stop the continued deterioration of the Yemeni rial, which has more than halved in value since the beginning of the conflict, creating more development problems for the population. In that regard, we trust the words of Mr. Griffiths, who this month in Abu Dhabi hinted at a possible master plan entailing a set of concerted measures among the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the agencies of the United Nations, the Gulf countries and the Yemeni Government.

For the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the security of airports and ports, which are gateways for humanitarian aid and goods, is another very disturbing issue. In that regard, and in compliance with international humanitarian law, the warring parties must refrain from carrying out acts that prevent regular access to those supplies, in addition to guaranteeing their safe transport to distribution sites, while ensuring that they reach all those in need.

Since April of last year, very recent data shows 1.2 million alleged cases of cholera and more than 2,500 deaths associated with the disease, making this one of the worst outbreaks in recent history. In that regard, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes and congratulates the joint efforts, supported by the World Health Organization and UNICEF, that have just led to the conclusion of a robust vaccination campaign, vaccinating hundreds of thousands of people. We hope that that approach will help to limit the spread of the pandemic.

Before concluding, my delegation once again urges the parties to abide by the rules of international humanitarian law and guarantee the protection of civilian infrastructure and the rights of civilians, so that the Yemeni population can find a way out of the

crisis and return to their homes. Moreover, we ask that all the parties involved in the conflict participate in the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and resume negotiations to reach a political solution, given that frank and inclusive dialogue among the parties is the only way to end the conflict.

Mr. Temenov (Kazakhstan): We join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock for his comprehensive update on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, and we convey our readiness to extend our full support to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the country. We also express our deep appreciation to Mr. Lowcock and, through him, the staff of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for working tirelessly in one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. My delegation has closely followed the recent developments and would like to make the following observations.

Kazakhstan strongly supports the United Nations call on all parties to safeguard civilian lives, prevent deaths and injuries, allow freedom of movement and protect hospitals, clinics and schools, in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. In that regard, we welcome the coordinated efforts of stakeholders, namely, the United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and the Gulf countries, to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Al-Hudaydah. We endorse the United Nations call on all parties to uphold international humanitarian law and refrain from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

All parties to the conflict should facilitate the continuation and expansion of commercial imports into all ports, including by addressing the delays linked to Yemeni Government Decree 75 and other restrictions. That will ensure that critical supplies can travel safely and quickly along all routes. Presently, the volume of commercial imports through the ports of Al-Hudaydah and Saleef continue to be below the needs of the population. Regrettably, access throughout the country is still impeded by the ongoing fighting, procedural checkpoints and the destruction of infrastructure.

We envisage a worsening situation if parties do not refrain from committing acts that may lead to an escalation of regional tension and insecurity. My delegation therefore urges all parties to immediately contribute to de-escalating violence and ending the offensive on Al-Hudaydah, as well as an unconditional ceasefire. All sides must find compromises and reject unilateral decisions that could harm the peace process, in order to prevent the potential break-up of the country.

We support Mr. Lowcock's call and acknowledge the importance of concerted action to address distortions in the Yemeni economy, including by supporting the currency, injecting liquidity, expediting lines of credit for importers and paying pensioners and civil servants. In that regard, we welcome today's announcement by the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of a contribution of $70 million through UNICEF to pay the salaries of teachers in Yemen, including in Houthi-controlled areas.

Kazakhstan would like to draw the Security Council's attention to the plight of 1.8 million children under the age of five, who are acutely malnourished and for whom immediate assistance must be mobilized. That is especially critical in the light of a new nationwide wave of cholera. The destruction of water supplies must therefore be prevented at all costs. Women, youth and civil society organizations need to be encouraged to play a critical role at the grassroots level, not only to alleviate suffering but also to become peacemakers and agents of change.

Finally, Kazakhstan expresses its unconditional support for the Special Envoy's efforts and urges parties to engage in good faith and without preconditions in the political process. We also call upon the parties to the conflict to demonstrate flexibility, avoid disagreements and properly resolve complex issues. We fully agree with the words of Secretary-General Guterres that "a negotiated political settlement through inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue" (*S/PV.8231, p. 2*) is the only solution. All measures must proceed in that direction.

Mr. Ipo (Côte D'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this meeting on the humanitarian situation in Yemen and thanks Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his very thorough briefing on the latest developments in the country's humanitarian situation.

According to United Nations reports, Yemen is now facing the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. Millions of children and families across Yemen may soon find themselves without food, clean drinking water and sanitation due to the continued conflict, particularly the fighting around the port city of Al-Hudaydah and the worsening economic crisis. An

additional 1.2 million people might soon need basic water and sanitation assistance, according to estimates by humanitarian agencies. Families who can no longer afford basic staples could soon join the 18.5 million people already affected by food insecurity.

Côte d'Ivoire remains particularly concerned about continued fighting, particularly around the port of Al-Hudaydah, the main gateway to approximately 90 per cent of humanitarian aid and 70 per cent of the country's imports. The clashes over control of that strategic port are hampering the delivery of humanitarian aid and causing the prices of basic necessities to soar.

Given the serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen, Côte d'Ivoire calls on all the parties to cease hostilities immediately. Convinced that there is no alternative to a political settlement of the crisis in Yemen, my country urges the warring parties to resume negotiations under the Special Envoy's peace plan. My country also calls on conflicting parties to remove all obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid to people in need.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire encourages the parties to the conflict to take ownership of the peace plan proposed by Mr. Griffiths. We welcome the work he has done and call on him to continue his mediation for an effective resumption of inter-Yemeni dialogue.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): Let me add our voice to those thanking Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for his deeply concerning, sobering and important briefing today. We are very grateful for his hard work and the work that his team does on the ground in Yemen every day.

The stories behind the huge number of people affected by the crisis have become all too familiar: babies ravaged by hunger, too weak to cry, and parents choosing between critical medical care for a child or food for their family. Now, as the Under-Secretary-General argued, continued deterioration and newly acute risk are apparent in every grim update, most recently in the reports of over 20,000 newly displaced people in northern Yemen, due to fighting in the area.

There are alternatives to that situation. The suffering of the Yemeni people is not inevitable. But unless the fighting stops and there are immediate efforts to stabilize the Yemeni rial, then the suffering of those who are already severely food insecure in Yemen will continue to worsen. In that regard, no one has worked harder or more tirelessly to bring about a political solution than Special Envoy Griffiths. He has our full support and we need him to succeed.

Until we achieve a political solution, we implore all the parties to take the measures necessary to protect civilians and critical civilian infrastructure and to ensure unfettered access for humanitarian goods and personnel and the movement of essential commercial goods. The parties must adhere to their obligations under international law and recognize that damage to ports and other civilian infrastructure will further drive food insecurity. In that regard, we urge parties to consider all possible measures to further mitigate and reduce unnecessary suffering from the conflict. We thank the United Nations for its efforts to maintain a de-confliction mechanism in that context to allow aid and commercial goods to flow despite the fighting.

We share the Under-Secretary-General's assessment that humanitarian assistance, especially in the past year, has been critical in staving off the worst outcomes and mitigating Yemeni suffering. The United States is one of the largest donors of humanitarian assistance to Yemen, having provided more than $1.2 billion in humanitarian aid since fiscal year 2017, including food, medical care, safe drinking water, shelter, psychosocial support and supplies to fight the spread of disease. The United States contributions to the World Food Programme operations have also been vital.

However, as the Under-Secretary-General said, we can and must do more. And so we are. In addition to continued humanitarian relief, we are expanding non-humanitarian assistance to address the consequences of conflict, including supporting efforts to enhance the Central Bank of Yemen's ability to function, so that it can begin to address Yemen's deteriorating economic situation and the currency depreciation that has made it even harder for Yemenis to afford to survive.

We will continue all those efforts, and hope that all parties will also recognize and help to respond to the suffering. At the same time, there is simply no alternative to a political solution. The dire situation that the Under-Secretary-General described is yet another reminder that this war and the suffering of the Yemeni people can end only at the negotiating table, not on the battlefield.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

At the outset, my delegation would like to thank the United Kingdom for having taken the initiative to request this meeting. We are also grateful for not only the briefing delivered by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Mark Lowcock, but also the work carried out by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

After having listened to Mr. Lowcock once again in this Chamber, we can reaffirm that not only the international community, but also the Council, has been warned. We cannot plead ignorance for what is happening in Yemen. I have listened carefully to each and every speaker and several words have been repeatedly used to describe the situation in Yemen: horrendous, horrifying, catastrophic consequences, imminent famine, cholera, war, extreme poverty, vicious clashes and economic collapse, to name a few.

My delegation expresses its serious concern at the delicate humanitarian situation caused by the continuing escalation of violence in Yemen, especially the intensification of bombings, air strikes and the launching of missiles against civilian populations. Unfortunately, those armed clashes, which have spread beyond the airport, have affected the tenth and sixteenth kilometres of the main road connecting the cities of Al-Hudaydah and Sana'a, making it almost impossible to use the road to transport goods and humanitarian aid. The clashes have also disabled access to the Red Sea Mills, one of the most important granaries in Yemen, with the capacity to store enough grain to feed 3.5 million people per month.

Moreover, the cholera outbreak represents a major concern, since it has infected more than 1.2 million people in 22 of the 23 governorates of Yemen and has caused more than 2,500 deaths since it started to spread in April last year. Unfortunately, the damage to water treatment facilities and plants, particularly in Al-Hudaydah, has increased the risk of outbreaks of cholera and other diseases. In September alone there were 13 cases of diphtheria and two deaths due to the disease.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the number of civilian victims who have died or have been seriously injured as a result of the clashes and attacks against civilian spaces and infrastructure amounts to more than 16,000 people, of whom more than 2,400 are children. Unfortunately, that chilling statistic is only increasing, given that since June there have been more than 170 fatalities and at least 1,700 injuries in the governorate of Al-Hudaydah alone.

Unfortunately, war, disease and hunger are not the only challenges the Yemeni people must face, as, over the past month, the governorate of Al-Mahrah, in the south-east of the country, has been affected by Cyclone Luban, as was mentioned by some Council members, which caused floods affecting more than 3,000 families, claimed the lives of 11 people and left 124 people injured. That situation exacerbates the urgent need for humanitarian assistance required by the population to survive.

Given all that has been said, we recall that more than 70 per cent of the imports and humanitarian assistance that enter Yemen do so by the port of Al-Hudaydah. Therefore, any kind of attack or military campaign against that city or port would not only seriously affect the more than 22 million people who currently require humanitarian assistance but, according to the Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen, Ms. Lise Grande, it would raise that number to an untenable level, dangerously increasing the number of people at risk of famine from 8 million to 13 million.

The military actions in Yemen only serve to undermine and weaken the efforts of our Organization and those of the Special Envoy to establish a dialogue that brings the parties closer to achieving a negotiated solution to the conflict. For that reason, we call on all the actors and parties involved to cease violence immediately, guarantee the integrity of Al-Hudaydah port and its access roads, abandon any preconditions to establishing dialogue and implement resolution 2216 (2015), thereby laying the foundation for a political solution that satisfies the demands and aspirations of the Yemeni people within the framework of respect for their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Finally, my delegation supports the process of consultations and dialogue initiated by the Special Envoy as an important initiative to guide the process of political negotiation that allows for the peaceful resolution of the situation in Yemen. We therefore reiterate our call to the actors and parties involved to join and contribute constructively to the process.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Binmubarak (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this month. I wish you and the friendly delegation of Bolivia every success. I also want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to speak before the Council.

I would like as well to thank Mr. Mark Lowcock for his briefing and for his efforts and those of his team in Yemen.

The priority of the Security Council is to maintain international peace and security by honouring United Nations resolutions, standards and international laws, not by imposing a reality on the Yemeni people, as some are trying to do. The Security Council must continue to play its role as a body concerned with maintaining international peace and security, and work on implementing its resolutions so that the Council can preserve its credibility in addressing any threat to international peace and security.

The Council has been present throughout the stages of the political process in Yemen since 2011. Together we have made great strides towards ending the Yemeni crisis that has been killing our citizens. That progress has been made in accordance with the agreed terms of reference: the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its implementation mechanism, the outcomes of the national dialogue and relevant Security Council resolutions, notably resolution 2216 (2015).

As members know, the delegation of the Houthi militias chose not to attend the Geneva consultations. However the Yemeni Government has supported and continues to support the efforts of the Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths. We stand ready to support his efforts in good faith — given the right conditions — in any initial consultations that could represent a true step forward in the Yemeni peace process and attain a sustainable solution to the Yemeni crisis. As we discuss the humanitarian situation in Yemen, we must take into account the following points.

First, the humanitarian suffering of the Yemeni people over the past three years is the result of a wanton coup against the State. All Yemen's civil and military institutions were hijacked by extremist ideological militias that do not understand the meaning of human rights, but instead only exploit human rights whenever it suits their ideological and extremist ideas and serves the interests of their rogue leaders working as regional agents for Iran and Hizbullah.

Since 21 September 2014, my country has been in a dark tunnel because of the Houthi militias. The humanitarian situation has deteriorated in Yemen although the political process had been moving steadily forward, with the support of the countries of the region and the international community, towards achieving security and stability and building a civilian, democratic, federal State where human rights are respected, the dignity of women and youth is protected, and the rights of the child and all vulnerable segments of society are protected, and the principles of justice and equality are honoured. However, the militias chose to violate all humanitarian laws and values by launching an aggression against the Yemeni people that spared no one — not journalists, college professors, children, women or even the Jewish and Baha'i communities, which is unprecedented in our history.

Secondly, the Houthi militias perpetrated all forms of killing, torture, forceful displacement of civilians in all Yemeni cities occupied by force, including the city of Taiz, whose citizens still suffer to this day, and other Yemeni cities. Civilians are still suffering from landmines planted by the Houthi militias, which have claimed the lives of thousands, including women and children. The number of landmines planted by the militias is now some 2 million, and the number of victims from June 2017 to June 2018 totalled 937 killed and 2,013 injured.

Thirdly, as long as the conflict persists, the Yemeni people will continue to suffer, and the militias will continue to violate the rights of the Yemeni people. They will continue to recruit children, force them to drop out of school and send them to the battlefronts. They will continue to exploit the difficult economic situation of Yemeni families and use orphanages and youth centres to recruit children to fight in their ranks. The number of children soldiers now stands at 20,000, with 1,316 casualties, including 552 were killed and 764 suffering from permanent disability.

Fourthly, the militias have not only perpetrated those crimes, but also assaulted humanitarian and aid workers according to reports from aid organizations. They have detained and prevented the entry of 84 aid vessels carrying food and oil. They have targeted seven aid and commercial vessels in the Red Sea and looted more than 696 trucks carrying aid. They are even selling

food items and humanitarian assistance on the black market and giving them to the poor in exchange for fighting in their ranks. They have detonated four trucks and killed two drivers. Last September, those militias broke into the silos of the World Food Programme in Al-Hudaydah and kidnapped two workers. They burned the silos and destroyed over 4,000 tonnes of food items. They prevented the unloading of 11,979 tonnes of diesel and 84,326 tonnes of petroleum in Al-Hudaydah seaport.

Everyone knows the grave violations of the Houthis in the areas under their control. Last month, Human Rights Watch documented a number of violations against innocent civilians who were kidnapped and taken hostage in an immoral and arbitrary way, in grave violation of international law and international humanitarian law. Since 2014, that organization has documented dozens of cases of kidnapping, forced detainment and disappearance, as well as torture, in addition to hundreds of cases documented by Yemeni human rights organizations. The Houthis are not only perpetrating such blatant violations to silence their political opponents and critics; they are also using kidnapping and torture as blackmail to extract money from innocent civilians in exchange for releasing their loved ones.

Houthi militias have been torturing, beating, hanging and removing the nails of detainees and threatening to rape them or their families in order to force innocent civilians and their families to pay a ransom in exchange for their release. The detainees have started to wish they were dead. Last month, those militias detained 17 girls at Sana'a University. They assaulted them for merely participating in a protest against the policy of starvation adopted by the militias against civilians in their areas of control. They also assaulted their families when they called for their release, in a manner not seen in Yemen prior to the emergence of those outlaw militias.

The Yemeni Government reiterates its commitment to international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. We ask that all those who violate such laws be held to account. We underscore the importance of working and coordinating with the relevant entities and of opening offices for United Nations agencies working to provide humanitarian assistance in the temporary capital of Aden and other main cities, so as to ensure the decentralization of humanitarian work so that it is not affected by complicated military operations. It would also ensure that militias do not exploit silos and use them as a cover to perpetrate military attacks in blatant violation of international humanitarian law, or plant landmines that impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance and endanger the lives of civilians. Humanitarian assistance must be provided to those in need.

We must also address the difficult economic situation my country faces as a result of the war and the fact that Houthi militias have taken control of my country's resources, including its internal and external reserves. That has a grave impact on the lives of the citizens. The Government of the Republic of Yemen, represented by His Excellency President Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, has therefore sought to restore and revive Yemen's economy. We have taken a number of essential and inevitable executive measures and decisions in order to adapt to the exceptional situation.

The Central Bank took several measures to meet the needs of primary goods importers, such as implementing a fixed foreign exchange rate policy, funded by a Saudi deposit, within a period not exceeding 15 days from the date of submission of the application. We also took the decision to provide $100 million to the Central Bank in order to cover the needs of small traders whose applications amount to less than $200,000. We provided $15 million to meet the needs of the Yemeni oil company to help it restore market balance by selling oil at suitable prices. We also took measures to limit the impact of the black market created by Houthi militias, organize requests for foreign currency and ensure the stability of our national currency and prevent the rial depreciation. That would enable us to provide primary goods and their derivatives to our citizens.

Pertaining to the measures that Mr. Lowcock addressed, our economic committee announced today that it would postpone the implementation of the executive mechanism related to credit-line measures on importing commodities. We announced that we would hold a workshop with Yemeni entrepreneurs and listen to their views in a way that would facilitate the entry of essential goods and commodities.

In that regard, we look forward to the vital role that will be played by the United Nations and other donor countries and institutions to ensure the stability of Yemen's currency by providing assistance to Yemen in foreign currency and transfers via the Central Bank, similar to the action taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. On behalf of the Government and the people

of Yemen, we would like to thank the countries of the Arab coalition, in particular the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, other donors and the United Nations for their efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people, the latest of which was a $70 million grant from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in coordination with UNICEF, to pay teacher salaries. I take this opportunity to call on all donors to meet their obligations under the framework of the 2018 humanitarian response plan for Yemen. The humanitarian situation in Yemen should be enough to turn the Council's words into action.

We appreciate all of the international community's humanitarian efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people. However, we believe that the suffering is man-made. There will be no sustainable solution to the crisis unless we first address the root causes of the problem in Yemen — that is, the coup d'état perpetrated by the Houthis — by finding a peaceful and comprehensive political solution, based on the terms of reference and on Council resolutions, particularly resolution 2216 (2015).

We fear that these meetings of the Council will become routine. At meetings, Council members refer to statistics, numbers and victims, but, once meetings adjourn, that information loses meaning. As the Council is unable to exert pressure on militias to compel them to submit to international will and implement resolutions adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, it must send a clear message to the Houthi militias that underscores that the international community will not remain silent while they perpetrate crimes and violations and cause prolonged humanitarian suffering. They must opt for either sustainable and genuine peace or face the Yemeni people and the international community.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.8380

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 October 2018

Original: English

Official communiqué of the 8380th (closed) meeting of the Security Council

Held in private at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 24 October 2018, at 9.30 a.m.

In accordance with rule 55 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the following communiqué was issued through the Secretary-General in place of a verbatim record:

"At its 8380th meeting, held in private on 24 October 2018, the Security Council considered the item entitled 'Briefing by the President of the International Court of Justice'.

"The President of the Security Council invited Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, President of the International Court of Justice, to participate in the meeting in accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

"The members of the Council heard a briefing by Judge Yusuf.

"The members of the Council and Judge Yusuf had an exchange of views."

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United Nations S/PV.8381

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8381 st meeting

Wednesday, 24 October 2018, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Adom
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

The situation in Myanmar

Letter dated 16 October 2018 from the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/926)

Letter dated 18 October 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Equatorial Guinea and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/938)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of China has asked for the floor.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): On 18 October, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, China, the Russian Federation and Equatorial Guinea sent a letter to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/938) expressing their opposition to holding this Council meeting to hear a briefing by the Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar established by the Human Rights Council.

The Charter of the United Nations clearly defines the responsibilities of the principal United Nations organs and the division of labour between them. The primary responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security. It should not get involved in country-specific human rights issues. The fact-finding mission on Myanmar is a special mechanism of the Human Rights Council and does not have a mandate to brief the Security Council. Nor is there a precedent for the Security Council to receive a briefing from a country-specific special mechanism of the Human Rights Council. By receiving a briefing from the Fact-Finding Mission, the Security Council will encroach on the mandates of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, violate provisions of the Charter and weaken the responsibilities and roles of various United Nations bodies, thereby leading to grave negative consequences.When it comes to the issue of Rakhine state, the Security Council should play a constructive role, and any action it takes should help to resolve the issue. Pushing for a briefing by the Human Rights Council's fact-finding mission in the Security Council will disrupt and undermine the ongoing dialogue process. It does not help to resolve the issue of Rakhine state but will rather further complicate it, running counter to the process of finding a settlement. That is why we are opposed to having this meeting and hearing this briefing.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United Kingdom has asked for the floor.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I understand that the Russian Ambassador may also want to speak, so I am happy for him to proceed, if he would like to. I shall speak after him.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wanted to explain our position regarding the proposal of some Council members to hear a briefing to the Security Council on the report of the Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar (A/HRC/39/64). We believe that this decision would be a mistake and would create a negative precedent for the future work of the Security Council.

As for the joint letter to the President of the Security Council from nine Member States (S/2018/926) requesting the holding of this briefing, in our view its very form is what might be termed an innovation in the work of the Security Council. To say it like it is, this is nothing but arm-twisting, in which the authors of the letter show the rest of us that the potential result of a procedural vote on it is for all practical purposes predetermined. We believe that the delegations that signed the letter are consciously torpedoing the possibility of consensus in the Security Council. The value of the Council's collective work lies in the unanimity of its decisions. Instead of undertaking a joint quest to find a long-term solution to the problem of the Rohingya refugees, therefore, these members are forcing the Council to engage in loudspeaker diplomacy.

The United States delegation, which actively supported the holding of today's briefing by issuing an invitation to the Human Rights Council briefer, recently announced that it was leaving the Human Rights Council and accompanied the announcement with a good deal of criticism of it. But now it turns out that the Human Rights Council is useful after all. Is this not clearly a double standard?

We believe that the work of the fact-finding mission on Myanmar is harmful and counterproductive. It does not have reliable information on what is going on with the Rohingya, as our and other experts said yesterday in a dialogue with the fact-finding mission in the Third Committee. In view of the foregoing, therefore, we believe that the report of the Mission is underprepared and one-sided, and the notion of chucking its so-called conclusions at the Security Council is overtly pernicious. Furthermore, since the report has already been discussed both in the Human Rights Council and the Third Committee, we see no added value in considering it here in the Security Council. That is, if

we want to avoid the duplication of the efforts of the principal organs of the United Nations in deeds rather than words. We also believe that discussing the report in the Council could cast doubt on the remit of the Human Rights Council, to which the Mission is accountable.

We would once again like to stress that the key to resolving the problem of the Rohingya refugees is in bilateral cooperation between Myanmar and Bangladesh. The role of the international community consists in providing assistance to Naypyidaw and Dhaka in implementing the existing agreements.

In the light of this, we will vote against holding the proposed briefing to discuss the conclusions of the fact-finding mission on Myanmar, and we call on other delegations to do the same.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I would like to make a statement on behalf of the United Kingdom, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden and the United States of America.

Mr. President, we have read carefully the letter that you and other colleagues sent on 18 October (S/2018/938). We have requested the Chair of the United Nations fact-finding mission on Myanmar to brief us today. The report produced by the Mission (A/HRC/39/64) is the most authoritative and comprehensive account of the human rights violations that have occurred in the country since 2011. It details in particular the events that took place in Rakhine state on and around 25 August 2017 and led to the forcible displacement of more than 725,000 refugees across an international border into Bangladesh.

As we will hear, the Fact-Finding Mission's findings are of the gravest nature. The report concludes that "gross human rights violations" and "serious violations of international humanitarian law" have been committed in Myanmar since 2011 and that many of these violations "undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law".

It makes a specific recommendation to the Security Council to ensure accountability for crimes under international law committed in Myanmar. Ensuring the prevention of such crimes — genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity — is one of the reasons why the United Nations and the Security Council were established in the first place. As members of the Security Council, we are today faced with a situation that clearly endangers international peace and security, and also a specific request for the Council to act.

It is therefore absolutely without doubt the Security Council's responsibility to hear the allegations concerning the gravest crimes under international law related to the situation and to deliberate on how to proceed, and so we vote in favour of holding this meeting.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/926, which contains a letter dated 16 October 2018 from the Representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council, and document S/2018/938, which contains a letter dated 18 October 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, China, Equatorial Guinea and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

In the light of the views expressed in documents S/2018/926 and S/2018/938 and the comments made by members of the Security Council, I intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

Accordingly, I shall put it to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Côte d'Ivoire, France, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Against:

Plurinational State of Bolivia, China, Russian Federation

Abstaining:

Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The provisional agenda received 9 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 3 abstentions. The provisional agenda has been adopted.

I now give the floor to members wishing to make statements following the voting.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia voted against the holding of this meeting because there is no precedent of a special mechanism of the Human Rights Council on a specific country reporting to the Security Council on its activities without mentioning the fact that such report is no part of the mandate of the fact-finding mission in question.

The Charter of the United Nations clearly establishes the functions of and the division of labour among all the principal organs of our Organization. It is therefore important to respect the mandates of each organ in order to avoid any overlapping, duplication, interference with or weakening of the work being done in these bodies, be it the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council or the Security Council. With that understanding, the Charter establishes in unequivocal terms that the primary responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security. This is therefore not the place to deal with human rights issues, as such issues have their own space for debate, study and discussion within the relevant specialized body, the Human Rights Council. This does not in any way detract from the seriousness of the issue at stake or the importance of dealing with it in the appropriate forums.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

As the provisional agenda has been adopted, I will now suspend the meeting for a brief recess, after which we will continue our consideration of the item on our agenda.

The meeting was suspended at 3.20 p.m. and resumed at 3.25 p.m.

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Myanmar

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Bangladesh and Myanmar to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Marzuki Darusman, Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, to participate in this meeting.

The Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Darusman.

Mr. Darusman: On behalf of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, I thank you, Mr. President, for this timely opportunity to brief the Security Council.

The Council is aware of our recent report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/39/64), including our detailed findings of 444 pages, establishing the facts and circumstances of recent alleged human rights violations and abuses in Myanmar, which are based on an investigation that scrupulously adhered to international best practices on human rights fact-finding. We worked for over a year to collect and corroborate information, weighing its validity and analysing it against applicable law in a spirit of objectivity and impartiality. We invite anyone who claims that our report is one-sided or based on a single source to read its 444 pages, including a full account of our methodology.

Our report characterizes the recent events in Rakhine state as a human rights catastrophe that was foreseeable and planned. It will have a severe impact for many generations to come, if not forever. The report describes in detail the Tatmadaw's so-called clearance operations in six villages, marked by large-scale massacres and other killings of civilians, including women, children and the elderly, as well as mass gang-rape, burning and looting.

The Mission verified similar operations in 54 separate locations across northern Rakhine state. Over 725,000 Rohingya fled. At least 392 villages were partially or totally destroyed. Estimates of 10,000 Rohingya deaths are conservative. Those attacks were widespread and systematic, their modus operandi across northern Rakhine state strikingly similar. While the attacks of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army contributed to the escalation and must be condemned, the operations of the security forces were brutal and utterly disproportionate. They were conducted in total disregard for human life and dignity, in violation of human rights and international humanitarian law.

That occurred against a backdrop of State policies and practices implemented over decades, steadily marginalizing and dehumanizing the Rohingya — resulting in a State-sanctioned and institutionalized system of oppression affecting the lives of Rohingya from birth to death. Similar clearance operations, albeit on a smaller scale, began in October 2016, with complete impunity. The following months

were marked by increased intimidation of the Rohingya, a surge in hate speech, instilling fear into other ethnic communities, and the mobilization of troops and other military assets into northern Rakhine state. The nature, scale and organization of those events demonstrate preparation and planning.

The mass displacement of the Rohingya and the burning of villages were followed by the appropriation of vacated lands. Entire villages were flattened and erased, along with every trace of the Rohingya communities. New structures were built for other communities, while the root causes of the exodus, including the oppression and exclusionary rhetoric, are being denied and continue unabated. The remaining Rohingya in Rakhine state are at grave risk, and conditions are not in place for a safe, dignified and sustainable return of the Rohingya in Bangladesh. Their return in this situation is tantamount to condemning them to life as subhumans and further mass killing.

Although horrific and intense, the situation of the Rohingya must not be seen in isolation. The Mission found similar patterns of serious human rights violations elsewhere in Myanmar, notably in Kachin and Shan states. They were predominantly committed by the Myanmar military following the same policies, tactics and conduct. In those conflict areas, we also found patterns of deliberate targeting of civilians, unlawful killings, torture, rape and sexual violence, arbitrary deprivation of liberty, forced labour and forced displacement.

Many of the serious violations described in our report undoubtedly amount to the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, which threaten the peace, security and well-being of the world. War crimes and crimes against humanity have been committed in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states. The mission also found sufficient information to warrant the investigation and prosecution of senior officials in the Tatmadaw on charges of genocide. That means that we consider that genocidal intent — meaning the intent to destroy the Rohingya in whole or in part — can be reasonably inferred.

At the core of this situation sits the Myanmar military, which has pursued these strategies and tactics for decades. The Tatmadaw, consistently and as a matter of policy and tactics, targets civilians and rapes women and girls. It actively pursues an exclusionary and discriminatory vision for the country. It has a clear chain of command, with those in leadership positions in effective control of its operations. It acts with total impunity. The contempt shown by the Tatmadaw for human life, integrity and freedom, and for international law generally, has had a devastating impact on the human rights, security and development of everyone in Myanmar. It is also a threat to regional stability and international peace and security.

The Security Council holds the power to break that cycle. The key is a sharp focus on accountability. Apart from accountability for atrocity crimes being a legal and moral obligation, we submit that there are at least three other compelling reasons for such a focus.

First, effective prevention is premised on accountability. A history of atrocity crimes combined with impunity and weak State institutions is a core risk factor for further violations. Sadly, that toxic mix has persisted in Myanmar for a long time. Impunity for gross human rights violations has demonstrably contributed to the validation of deeply oppressive and discriminatory conduct, enabled the recurrence of atrocity crimes, emboldened the perpetrators and silenced the victims. Unless that impunity is addressed, violence and associated atrocity crimes will continue and recur.

Secondly, without accountability there can be no sustainable, safe and dignified return of the Rohingya to Myanmar. How can the Rohingya be expected to return to Myanmar, where their suffering is denied and the perpetrators enjoy complete impunity? Can we reasonably expect them to rely for their protection on the same unaccountable security forces who killed, raped and devastated their communities?

Thirdly, there can be no just and lasting reconciliation without accountability. The complex issues of citizenship, deep-rooted discrimination, oppression and distrust between communities cannot be overcome without a human rights and rule-of-law-based approach. Impunity is the antithesis of that. We firmly believe that accountability will pave the way towards stability, development and peace and security for all in Myanmar.

Unfortunately, accountability in Myanmar must come from the international community. Impunity is deeply entrenched in Myanmar's political and legal system, effectively placing the Tatmadaw above the law. Myanmar's internal inquiries have proven to be ineffective failures, with no reason to consider that that

will change in the foreseeable future. Even if domestic leaders were well-intentioned, accountability at the national level is currently unattainable. The Security Council must refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court or another international ad hoc tribunal.

The Council and its individual members should also impose targeted individual sanctions against those most responsible for serious crimes under international law. In our report, we identified six of the Tatmadaw's most senior generals with command responsibility for the clearance operations in Rakhine state, starting with the Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. They must cease to benefit from all international support, both institutionally and personally. That includes an arms embargo on Myanmar and a prohibition of all transactions with Tatmadaw-affiliated enterprises.

We also call for the Council's support for a comprehensive independent inquiry into the United Nations involvement in Myanmar since 2011. No organization involved in a catastrophe of these proportions should fail to review its engagement and learn lessons for future prevention. The review should include the performance of United Nations organs, agencies, departments, funds and programmes under all three pillars — development, human rights and peace and security. In addressing and preventing human rights violations, the United Nations succeeds or fails in relation to all of those three pillars collectively.

If anyone were to seek to deliberately foment conflict and extremism, the events in Myanmar could serve as a step-by-step manual. Dehumanizing a population, calling them all terrorists, depriving them of all rights, segregating and attacking them, raping and killing them, crowding them into internally displaced persons camps or driving them out and protecting the killers from justice — those steps can be, and almost certainly will be, learned and deployed in other countries against other populations.

The international community must be gravely concerned. Myanmar presents precisely the kind of threat to peace and security that the United Nations — particularly the Council — was created to address. We urge the Council to take action. Decisive action is needed to halt the destructive dynamics in Myanmar and prevent the further fomenting of hatred, hostility, discrimination and extremism that will inevitably lead to further devastation. Impunity must not be excused and continue to embolden the Tatmadaw in its promotion of Bamar-Buddhist supremacy. National sovereignty is not a license to commit crimes against humanity or genocide.

There can be no moving on from this crisis without addressing its root causes, all of which continue to exist today, and primarily the presence of an unaccountable military that acts with complete impunity. The Rohingya and all of Myanmar's people — in fact the entire world — is looking to the Council to take action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Darusman for the information he provided.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): I thank the Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar for that compelling, shocking and moving briefing.

As I said on behalf of the nine Council members that called for this meeting, the briefing we heard today concerns allegations of the gravest crimes against international law: genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. On this day in 1945, the United Nations came into being. We agree with the Chairperson: What is the United Nations for, and what is the Security Council for, if they cannot deal with some of the worst things that a Government can do to its own people? The Security Council has a solemn responsibility to consider those matters and decide how to proceed. Despite the objections of some Council members today, we believe that it is right that this meeting is taking place, and I will include in my remarks what should happen, in our view, after this meeting. I want to draw out two points in the mission's report (A/HRC/39/64) and Mr. Darusman's briefing today.

First, I will address the situation in Rakhine, which is an enduring catastrophe. Human rights violations against the people of Rakhine, ethnic Rakhine as well as Rohingya, continue to this day. The Rohingya in particular continue to face daily intimidation; restrictions on their freedom of movement, access to markets, education and health care; continued discrimination; and denial of their right to citizenship.

As the Chairperson said, the Rohingya Muslims who are left behind in Rakhine are not safe, and cannot be safe. And the Rohingya who are in the camps

in Bangladesh cannot go home until those matters are addressed. Although the Burmese authorities have previously claimed that 81 out of the 88 recommendations of the Annan Advisory Commission on Rakhine State have been implemented, there is very little evidence that sincere efforts have been made to address the acute deprivation of human rights, which lies at the root cause of that crisis.

Although we previously welcomed the signing of the memorandum of understanding among the Government, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme, those United Nations agencies continue to be denied access to large parts of Rakhine. The conditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation are manifestly not in place. Any calls for immediate repatriation in the current circumstances are deeply irresponsible. We first need to see the Burmese Government cooperate fully with the United Nations and make genuine progress to change the situation, in line with the Annan Commission recommendations.

In the meantime, the United Kingdom commends the Government and the people of Bangladesh for continuing to show great generosity, host the refugee population and cooperate in good faith with the Burmese Government. The needs of the refugees continue to be great, including protection, legal status and assistance, and we call on the international community to intensify its support for the United Nations joint response plan.

Secondly, Rakhine is the most egregious example of the conduct of the Burmese military, but it is not the only one. The report makes clear that the Burmese military is conducting human rights violations across the country against other ethnic communities, most notably in Kachin and Shan states. Accountability is vital to get justice for the Rohingya and others who have suffered. It is necessary to give the Rohingya confidence that they can return to Myanmar/Burma. But, fundamentally, it is necessary in order to prevent the Burmese military from committing those same crimes again and again against the people of Myanmar.

It is vital that the Council act to uphold the Charter of the United Nations, and I take very seriously what the Chairperson said about the need to send a signal from the Council to other countries around the world, the Governments of which may be tempted to take a leaf out of the Burmese military's horrific playbook and execute such crimes on their own people.

Myanmar/Burma has established a domestic commission of inquiry. We note the Fact-Finding Mission's conclusion that that commission cannot provide a real avenue for accountability. We note also the six generals, whom the report mentions, with command responsibility, starting with the Senior General. We note, too, that previous commissions of inquiries have been whitewashed and they have preserved the military's long-standing impunity. The Government has repeatedly denied the crimes described to us today, and it has locked up journalists who have exposed Government wrongdoing, most notably the two Reuters journalists, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. I repeat the United Kingdom's call for their immediate release.

If there is to be any faith in this commission of inquiry — this latest commission of inquiry — it should be independent, report transparently on its progress, operate according to international standards, as the fact-finding mission itself did, and cooperate with other bodies gathering evidence, such as the fact-finding mission and the ongoing independent mechanism that the Human Rights Council voted earlier this month to establish. We have repeatedly asked the Burmese Government to work closely with the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the findings of the commission of inquiry should lead to an independent judicial process, where all, including the military, are equal before the law. Otherwise, if there is not going to be domestic accountability in Burma, then the United Kingdom believes that we must consider all options, including a referral to the International Criminal Court or an ad hoc tribunal.

I never thought, in my diplomatic career, that I would hear a briefing to the Security Council as compelling, but detailing such awful treatment of a people, as we have heard today. The crimes that we have heard echo those committed in Rwanda and Srebrenica approximately 20 years ago. The Security Council acted in those two situations. It acted too late to prevent them, which is to our lasting shame, but it did act to ensure that accountability was brought to bear on those responsible.

As the Chairperson said, national sovereignty is not a license to commit crimes against humanity. It is not a license to wreak such havoc on the livelihoods and lives of one's own people. The United Kingdom now plans to work with our partners to press for progress in creating the conditions so that the refugees can return, but also so that we can have accountability that genuinely ends

the Burmese military's impunity. In the face of the acts we heard described today, we believe that this is a responsibility that the Security Council owes not just to the Rohingya or the peoples of Burma, but to people everywhere around the world.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands):

> "I was eight months pregnant. They stomped me and kicked my stomach with their boots, and then they stripped me naked. I was blindfolded and hung by my wrists from a tree. I was raped nine times, and they left me tied to the tree.

That is but one of the many horrendous accounts of Rohingya survivors, as reported by the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar. Those stories shock our collective conscience and implore us to act.

Let me take this opportunity to thank Mr. Darusman for his impressing and sobering briefing to us today, as well as for his efforts in delivering a substantive report. It is important that the Council hear directly from relevant human rights bodies, as the Security Council has the authority to refer situations to the International Criminal Court. Many issues deserve our urgent attention, such as the lack of access to Rakhine state, the need to create an environment conducive to repatriation through the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, formerly led by Kofi Annan, and the fate of the detained Reuters journalists.

Today, however, I will focus on accountability and make three points: first, on the findings of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar established by the Human Rights Council; secondly, on the road to accountability; and, thirdly, onthe urgent need to respond.

The report of the fact-finding mission (A/HRC/39/64) is deeply worrying. It has based its findings on 875 in-depth interviews with victims and eyewitnesses that show the same clear pattern of conduct by the military, border guard police and vigilantes. Its analysis shows convincingly that the gravest crimes under international law have been committed in Rakhine state. The mission furthermore concludes that, on reasonable grounds, the factors allowing the inference of genocidal intent are present and that the crimes committed against the Rohingya may even amount to genocide. The report stresses the need for a competent court of law to determine whether specific individuals are guilty of those crimes. Those findings cannot simply be taken note of and then set aside. They implore the international community to act.

That brings me to my second point — the need to ensure accountability for those crimes. The fact-finding mission's report highlights the urgent need for prosecutions for the gravest crimes under international law and to hold those responsible to account. Justice for the victims is an end in and of itself, but it is also an essential prerequisite to prevent it from happening again. Decades of discrimination against the Rohingya, followed by complete inaction, have brought us to this point. We cannot afford to respond with inaction once again and allow the repetition of those gruesome acts, either in Rakhine state or across other parts of Myanmar where the same perpetrators are targeting other minorities. We can see that happening now in Kachin and Shan states.

A meaningful effort towards ensuring accountability can also be a means to ensure that the Rohingya feel safe enough to voluntarily return to their places of origin in Myanmar. We would like to be hopeful about the national commission of inquiry. The Myanmar Government, however, in the past has repeatedly failed to genuinely prosecute the perpetrators of human right violations. We recall the fact-finding mission's conclusion that it is unlikely that Myanmar's judiciary can deliver on a fair and independent trial. In order to make that happen, we need to step up international involvement. The creation of the independent mechanism by the Human Rights Council is a crucial first step to enable future prosecutions. Preserving evidence is key, and we strongly urge the Myanmar authorities to cooperate with the independent mechanism and all other human rights mechanisms. Still, holding the perpetrators accountable for the most serious crimes is beyond their mandate. The International Criminal Court was created exactly for that purpose.

That brings me to my final point — the urgent need to respond. Coordinated action by the Security Council, including through presidential statement S/PRST/2017/22 of November 2017 and our visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh in April, have resulted in incremental change for the better. However, the pace has been slow. The Council has engaged constructively with the Myanmar Government but needs to conclude that this approach has yielded minimal results. We cannot allow Myanmar to play for time while the fate

of the Rohingya remains unchanged. The international community cannot rely on the generous hospitality of Bangladesh forever.

The findings of the fact-finding mission demand action not only from the Human Rights Council, the General Assembly or the Special Envoy. It is time that the Council shoulder its responsibility. We need to refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court and use all tools available to us to create meaningful change on the ground, including targeted sanctions and an arms embargo. Much remains to be done to ensure that the Rohingya can safely return to their country and continue to live their lives in safety and freedom in Myanmar, as they deserve. Myanmar needs to show progress. The time to act is now.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I want to especially thank Mr. Darusman, Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on myanmar established by the Human Rights Council. It is critically important that he be with us in the Security Council today for this briefing. One question that I would like to ask him at some point — or when we can get an answer — is: What is the status of the quality of life for the Rohingya who remain in Burma? What is the Government doing to protect them to make sure that this does not happen to them, as well?

United States President John Adams famously said that facts are stubborn things. Nowhere is this more true than the facts of the atrocities committed by the Burmese security forces against Rohingya children, women and men. The last time that the Security Council met to consider the situation in Burma (see S/PV.8333), I discussed the United States State Department's report on the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya at the hands of these security forces. The accounts were first-hand and the details were stomach-turning, including women and girls raped, villages razed and babies tossed into fires.

Today, the source of the information is the United Nations fact-finding mission. The Government of Burma unfortunately refused to cooperate with the mission. The events reported by the fact-finding mission parallel those of the United States State Department report. Once again, we are hearing about torture, mutilation, repeated massacres, gang rapes and the obliteration of entire villages — all perpetrated against the Rohingya minority by the Burmese security forces. And once again, there are those in this Chamber who have repeatedly attempted to block the Security Council and the world from hearing about what is happening to the Rohingya in Burma. But facts are stubborn things, and, despite the best efforts of the Burmese Government and its allies, the awful facts of the atrocities against the Rohingya cannot be avoided by those who deny them.

I want to thank the members of the Security Council that voted for this briefing and this meeting to be transparent. I also want to address the concerns of some members of the Security Council that feel that transparency about the crimes detailed in the report (A/HRC/39/64) will somehow set back the cause of peace in Burma. They argue that being open and honest about the vicious treatment of the Rohingya will increase the Burmese people's resentment of them. They argue that what is needed in Burma is time and space. We do not accept this logic. In fact, not only is it wrong, but its backward. Time and space alone will not heal the wounds that have been opened in Burma, and covering up the crimes of the Burmese military and security forces will not allow that country to move forward. Only accountability for the crimes against the Rohingya will serve the cause of peace and Burma.

This is not about finger-pointing. It is about accepting the realities of what happened so that healing and accountability can occur. We have all heard the excuses offered by those who have fought this briefing. They argued that the Security Council is not the appropriate place to discuss those atrocities. Our work, they say, is peace and security, not human rights, but the forcible movement of more than 700,000 people across borders is undeniably a matter of international peace and security. — just ask the Bangladeshi Government or the Rohingya themselves.

We are grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for its generosity hosting a total of more than 1 million Rohingya refugees, but this is not just Bangladesh's problem. This is the region's problem. This is our problem. All of us — the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland and Sweden — have worked closely to keep the Security Council's continued spotlight on the horrible atrocities in Burma. We will work to hold the Burmese security forces accountable. Now is the time to move on from focusing on the abuses to focusing on the abused.

Despite the security forces' claims to be acting against "terrorists", the root cause of the crisis is the second-class status of the Rohingya in Burma.

In addition to the atrocities they have suffered, the fact-finding mission's report details the systematic repression of the Rohingya by the Government of Burma. As noted during the briefing, security forces have detained Rohingya men and abducted Rohingya women. The Rohingya were subject to especially tight restrictions on freedom of movement, as well as freedom of religion. Some refugees have reported that the military threatened those who prayed — even at home — with beatings, arrests and death. They also detailed cases of the military's desecration of sacred texts, and some saw soldiers burning and urinating on copies of the Qur'an. It is the Burmese Government that has both the power and the moral obligation to end that.

The burden falls on it. Restrictions imposed upon the Rohingya, including on freedom of movement and religion, must end. The Burmese Government must create a direct and credible path to obtaining citizenship for ethnic Rohingya. The Burmese military must accept civilian rule. Its refusal to do so puts Burma at further risk of conflict and stunts its growth as a modern nation. As the world rightly condemns the murder of a journalist in Turkey, we must not forget the outrageous imprisonment of the Reuters journalists in Burma. The United States continues to call for their immediate release. There must be accountability for the crimes of the Burmese military and security forces — crimes that have been thoroughly and credibly documented. And the same energy that has been put into fearing and isolating the Rohingya should be put towards educating and training them so that they can lead productive lives, for their families and for the future of Burma.

Thanks to the work of the fact-finding mission, we all know what was done to the Rohingya and we know who is responsible. We must now take the next steps to ensure that this never happens again. Justice is due for the people who fled Burma in fear. Justice is due for those whose lives have been forever transformed by violence. Justice — not vengeance, not payback — is necessary for Burma to heal. The United States will continue to issue the call for justice, here and elsewhere, until all of the people of Burma are able to live in safety and dignity in their own country. That is the case for justice in Burma.

Before I end my remarks, I would like to say a final thing about how we do our jobs here at United Nations. There are many ways we can choose to make our arguments to each other and the world. We can be civil or we can be uncivil. We can choose to make a scene or we can choose to treat the issues we care about with dignity and respect. We are all aware — and none more so than you, Mr. President — of the way discussions of justice and human rights have been conducted in recent days, and especially your behaviour, that of your mission and of the Cuban mission. It was a very poor reflection on the President of the Security Council. We are grateful that this afternoon, at least, you have chosen the path of civility and respect.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly thanking Mr. Marzuki Darusman, Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, for his chilling and insightful briefing and more broadly for the outstanding work that his team has carried out, professionally and independently, in difficult conditions. The 875 interviews conducted, along with the variety of information sources used, attest to the solidity of the work that he has done. Let me also take the opportunity to emphasize the importance for the Security Council to continue to rely upon the work of the instruments established by the Human Rights Council in order to fully carry out its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

Since the violence of August 2017, France has consistently underlined its concern and called for the mobilization of the Security Council in response to what President Macron, echoing the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has described since September 2017 as "ethnic cleansing". France is extremely concerned about the findings of the fact-finding mission's report (A/HRC/39/64), according to which charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes — committed in particular against the Rohingya in Rakhine state but also in Kachin and Shan states — could be brought against the Burmese army and security forces. The fact-finding mission's report concludes in paragraph 85 that on the basis of "reasonable inference", there are factors "that have allowed genocidal intent to be established ". It also notes that attacks and sexual violence committed by the Burmese army in villages, including against children, constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law that may constitute war crimes.

Establishing the facts is essential if justice is to one day be done and to enabling genuine reconciliation. And the facts that have been presented to us, along with their merciless premeditation, amount to the highest level of severity within the scale of international crimes. The Security Council cannot turn a blind

eye to those facts, unless it relinquishes its own responsibilities and renounces its very raison d'être. If the Security Council feels that such a situation does not concern it, what situation would? Let us also be aware that our action or inaction in response to the tragedy is being closely watched by all those who could commit comparable atrocities. This means that our collective responsibility is imperative, now and in the future. May Mr. Darusman's message and warning be clearly heard by all.

The sentencing on 3 September of two Reuters journalists to seven years in prison by the Burmese courts, while they were preparing a report on the serious allegations of human rights violations in the Rakhine state, is the latest example of the climate of fear that hinders the investigative efforts on the ground. It constitutes a serious violation of the freedom of the press. On behalf of France, I reiterate the call for the release of those two journalists.

In that context, and in accordance with the presidential statement adopted by the Council almost a year ago (S/PRST/2017/22), we must remain mobilized around three main and complementary priorities.

The first is humanitarian support for the Rohingyas who remain in Rakhine state and to refugees in the camps in Bangladesh. In Burma, the tripartite agreement concluded in June by the Burmese authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme was an important step, but its implementation by the Burmese authorities must be significantly accelerated. The restoration of unhindered humanitarian access to all affected villages in Rakhine state is urgent to meet the needs of the population. It is also urgent for the displaced Rohingya people in Rakhine state to regain full freedom of movement and access to basic services. In Bangladesh, we reiterate our appreciation for the exceptional generosity of the authorities and the people, and for the outstanding work being carried out by United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations. As long as the conditions for their voluntary, dignified and sustainable return are not met, international assistance will remain essential to supporting Rohingya refugees living in extremely precarious conditions.

The second priority is the effective implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, formerly led by Kofi Annan, for which we have been calling for more than a year. The Commission proposed a road map, which the Burmese Government has accepted and the Security Council has endorsed, to enable all the people of Rakhine state to live together in peace. France reiterates in particular the importance of the recommendations on the question of citizenship and the revision of the 1982 law, as well as equal rights, including the right of access to public services, health care and education for all persons belonging to the Rohingya community.

The report contains other very relevant recommendations on the freedom of movement, the socioeconomic development of the Arakan and the fight against discrimination against all minorities that, if effectively implemented, would constitute important confidence-building measures allowing for the voluntary return of refugees in accordance with international law. Through that, what is at stake is the possibility of a stable, inclusive and democratic rule of law in Burma, governed by a civilian power and based on the equal recognition and citizenship of all, without distinction.

Finally, the third priority, which is inseparable from the first two, is the fight against impunity. We call on the international community to identify all the consequences of the conclusions of the fact-finding mission. The decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 6 September, which concluded that the Court has jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of Rohingya from Burma to Bangladesh, is an important step in the fight against impunity. We welcome the decision of the Court's Prosecutor, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, to open a preliminary review of the allegations and reiterate our full support for the Prosecutor and the ICC in their ongoing work.

The decision of the Human Rights Council to establish an independent and permanent investigative mechanism is also a very important step. France calls on all States and regional and international bodies to support the rapid operationalization of that mechanism, which will allow for the collection and preservation of evidence concerning all allegations of crimes committed in Burma. We call on all States to cooperate with the ICC and the mechanism. The evidence collected will be used in proceedings before competent national or international jurisdictions. Finally, we call on the Burmese commission of inquiry to cooperate with all United Nations bodies and mandate-holders.

The situation of extreme distress of the Rohingya population is a crushing blow to the human conscience and violates all the norms and values that inspire and form the basis of the United Nations. That is why we must step up our efforts and our collective commitment to shedding light on the crimes that have been committed in order for justice to be done and for the Rohingyas who wish to return to Burma to do so in dignified, safe and sustainable conditions. The United Nations has a vital role to play, and we recall in that regard our support for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General. France will continue to be actively engaged with respect to this major crisis and stands ready to consider all the options available to the Council to contribute to a lasting solution.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation and thanks to the Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, for attending this meeting and for his comprehensive briefing. The efforts of the fact-finding mission are indeed appreciated. We thank him for his honesty in presenting the facts to the international community.

What we have listened to today in the briefing of the fact-finding mission reaffirms the conclusions of the international community on the crimes that have been committed. The briefing was totally consistent with what we witnessed during the Security Council visit to Rakhine state and what we heard from eyewitnesses to those crimes during our meetings with the Rohingya refugees at the Cox's Bazar camps. While we strongly condemn the acts witnessed in Rakhine state, which run counter to international norms and laws, we reaffirm the need for the Government of Myanmar to assume its primary responsibility to protect its citizens and ensure that military force will not be used against them.

More than 14 months have elapsed since violence erupted in Rakhine state. Those acts of violence led to the displacement of more than 720,000 people to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. It is truly regrettable that after all this time the displacement continues to this day. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees confirms the displacement of an additional 168 people from Myanmar to Bangladesh by the end of September. We express our concern over such displacement. That reflects the continued deterioration of the situation in Rakhine state in particular, and other states of Myanmar in general.

My delegation did not ask for this meeting to be convened to blame the Government of Myanmar for what happened. Instead, we asked because of our principled and firm position in favour of resolving conflicts by peaceful means, and our belief in preventive diplomacy. We welcome the efforts of States of the region to resolve this humanitarian crisis. However, the steps taken by Myanmar until now have been insufficient, and most have not been translated into reality on the ground. The Government of Myanmar has yet to implement all the steps and demands laid out by the Security Council in its presidential statement S/PRST/2017/22, or the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State with respect to addressing the root causes of the crisis, the suffering of the refugees and ensuring their voluntary return in safety and dignity to their homes in Myanmar.

The return of the Rohingya minority to their homes can begin only when a series of measures is taken to build trust and ensure that their return is both safe and dignified. That includes conducting independent and transparent investigations into the crimes and violations committed against the rights of the Rohingya minority in Rakhine state. Other measures include ending violence and ethnic discrimination and immediately closing all camps for internally displaced persons. It is also imperative to allow United Nations agencies and other partners access to all affected regions in Myanmar. All residents of Rakhine state should enjoy and unrestructed safe freedom of movement.

We firmly believe that addressing the root causes of the Rohingya minority crisis requires the prompt handling of two essential issues. The first concerns the need for the authorities of Myanmar to deal with the Rohingya minority without discrimination, regardless of ethnicity or religion, and to grant them their inherent right to citizenship. The second is the need to guarantee the right to accountability through transparent and fair investigations based on the collection of all proofs and evidences so as to ensure a fair prosecution of the perpetrators of such inhumane crimes. We welcome Human Rights Council resolution 39/2 and the recommendations of the fact-finding mission that the Security Council should ensure accountability for crimes in Myanmar, particular because the report concludes that some serious human rights violations in Rakhine state constitute the most serious crimes under international law.

In conclusion, the State of Kuwait reaffirms the need for the Security Council to address this humanitarian crisis with the greatest degree of diplomatic flexibility. The Council must speak in one voice in order to obtain the necessary results. When the number of displaced persons reaches 720,000, this proves that there is a real crisis impacting international peace and security. When 53 per cent ofthe displaced are children, that makes us certain that there is a real catastrophe. When the percentage of children and women combined hits 80 per cent of the displaced, that confirms the existence of a humanitarian crisis that must be addressed.

The reality on the ground in Cox's Bazar and Rakhine state requires us, as members of the Security Council, to take specific measures that would serve as a road map that has been long awaited by a minority that has suffered from the scourges of war, violence and acts of killing. That minority is still seeking to exercise its rights and to hold accountable all those who have violated the most basic human rights and perpetrated crimes with the intent of forever erasing the identity of that minority.

Respect for the rule of law, the defence of human rights, dialogue and resort to peaceful ways to settle disputes are among the main principles that the State of Kuwait defends in all forums.

Cases such as those in Myanmar cannot be ignored by the Security Council. That is especially true for the refugee issue, which seems to have last a long time, until a just and final solution can be found, allowing the Rohingya minority to enjoy all its rights.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I thank Mr. Darusman for his informative briefing. We really commend the dedicated and meticulous work of the independent international fact-finding mission in Myanmar, and we believe it was important that his report, establishing the facts and circumstances of the crisis, in particular Rakhine state, could be presented to the Security Council today.

We have been actively seized with the situation in Myanmar since we joined the Council in January 2017. In the beginning, our engagement was in a preventive spirit, including to support the Secretary-General. There were worrying reports and the situation grew worse. I want to quote from the report of the fact-finding mission: "What happened on 25 August 2017 and the following days and weeks was the realization of a disaster long in the making." (*A/HRC/39/64, para. 31*). Despite these early warning signals, there was resistance, and too little was done too late to prevent this crisis of immense proportions from evolving. There should be important lessons to draw from this for the Council.

Since the peak of crisis in August last year, the Council has succeeded in taking some small, but important, steps. In November, we unanimously adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2017/22, setting out a road map to address the crisis, and in April the Council undertook an unprecedented visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar to follow up on the implementation of the road map. However, as all previous speakers have underlined today, too little real progress has been achieved on the ground. While some rudimentary architecture for the repatriation of refugees has been put in place, the security and human rights situation in Rakhine is still far from being adequately addressed. More than 100,000 people have been confined in camps for internally displaced persons since 2012, and the Government has failed to close the camps in a sustainable manner. Freedom of movement is still restricted and media is not allowed access. Rohingya continue to flee to Bangladesh in the hundreds every month.

The Myanmar Government claims that it has implemented most of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, formerly led by the late Kofi Annan. Some steps have indeed been taken, but what is absolutely clear is that the vision set out in this important report remains distant. Most importantly, a genuine process towards resolving the issue of citizenship in a way that fully satisfies legitimate rights is still absent. Continued action by the Council with regard to the crisis in Rakhine is therefore needed, and I would like to highlight four areas.

First, the United Nations and humanitarian partners must be allowed full and unhindered access to Rakhine state. While some limited access has been granted, including to carry out assessments in a few villages, broader access for assessment and protection is urgently needed. The memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme must be fully implemented.

Secondly, conditions must be created to ensure that all those who have fled can return to their places of origin in a safe, voluntary and sustainable manner. For this to take place, refugees need dignified conditions to return to, where they can begin to rebuild their lives, free from fear and with confidence in the future. This will

require real change on the ground. We need a new deal in Rakhine, as the late Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated at the Arria formula meeting in October last year. The Annan Commission report provides the framework for such a new deal. The genuine implementation of its recommendations is urgent.

Thirdly, all avenues must be pursued to ensure effective accountability for the crimes committed. Today's presentation by the United Nations-mandated fact-finding mission has provided the Council with solid and credible evidence. The Rohingya population and other groups in Rakhine state have been subjected to systematic and widespread human rights violations. Many of these violations undoubtedly amount to the gravest crimes under international law. We note in particular that the fact-finding mission report includes crimes against humanity and even genocide.

The report presented to the Council today should be a turning point. The Council must now take meaningful action on accountability. We should pursue consultations on a Security Council draft resolution, including a referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court. It is for these kinds of situations that the Council has been given the authority to make referrals to the Court.

Fourthly, the refugee camps outside Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh need continued and enhanced support. More funding is urgent. Only less than half of the response plan has so far been covered, seriously hampering humanitarian efforts. Protection in the refugee camps must be improved, not least for the most vulnerable. Particular attention should be given to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence — women and men, girls and boys.

The fact-finding mission report also sheds important light on the violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights law that are being perpetrated by the Myanmar military in other parts of the country, most notably in Kachin and Shan states. Indiscriminate air strikes, mortar shelling and the use of land mines have a devastating impact on civilians in these regions, and humanitarian access continues to be limited.

These conflicts are among the longest ongoing armed conflicts in the world and are at risk of further escalation. To stay true to our commitments to preventing and sustaining peace, we should be actively addressing these situations with a more proactive United Nations engagement. The military and the Government must redouble their efforts to advance the peace process. Such a process needs to be inclusive, with the meaningful participation of women. To achieve lasting peace, a political solution is needed that addresses the aspirations and grievances of all Myanmar's ethnic minorities and ends the culture of impunity in the country, as forcefully underlined by Mr. Darusman today.

Myanmar is at a crossroads and now has a historic decision to make. Either it chooses the path towards more repression and growing international isolation, or it chooses the path of justice, peace and prosperity. If it chooses the latter, the international community stands ready to support it. Regional actors have a critical role to play. The Special Envoy's positive engagement to build trust is needed and should now be translated into concrete steps forward. The United Nations and its partners have the capacity to support peace, humanitarian and longer-term development efforts.

We cannot expect the Government to solve everything overnight, but steps are urgently needed to demonstrate commitment and gain credibility in the international community. One such simple step would be to immediately pardon and release the two imprisoned Reuters journalists. Myanmar should further recognize the gravity of the crisis, take needed measures on accountability and improve the situation in Rakhine. Only then will conditions for safe and voluntary return of refugees be in place.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank the Chairperson of the Human Rights Council's independent international fact-finding mission, Mr. Marzuki Darusman, for his detailed and very worrying briefing.

The alarming findings presented in his report show that the problem is grave and should be dealt with accordingly. I would like to underline the importance of accountability. While welcoming the State Counsellor's commitment to bringing all the perpetrators of human rights violations and other criminal acts to justice, we stress that the credible allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses must be investigated.

We call on all sides to put an immediate end to all violence. We particularly urge Myanmar to ensure the protection of all civilians without discrimination and to fully abide by international human rights law. We further reiterate the call on the Government of Myanmar to take every possible step to defuse the

tensions between communities and to grant full, safe and unconditional humanitarian access without delay. We call on the Government and its security forces to ensure that security, the rule of law and accountability prevail in Myanmar, including in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan states. We must also seek a comprehensive and durable solution addressing the root causes of the problem, including the elimination of statelessness, discrimination and underdevelopment, as outlined in the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. We hope the Government of Myanmar will swiftly and fully implement the Commission's recommendations in that regard. We are of the view that lasting peace and stability can be achieved only through comprehensive and inclusive national dialogue, with the participation of all ethnic groups.

We acknowledge Myanmar's establishment in July of an independent commission of inquiry, and the Secretary-General's appointment of a Special Envoy on Myanmar. The commission is expected to submit a report within six months. We hope that the commission will bring us closer to ensuring accountability by working in an independent, objective and transparent way. We also note the Special Envoy's visit to Myanmar this month and encourage the Government of Myanmar to continue cooperating with both the commission and the Special Envoy. At the same time, we reiterate our call to Myanmar to fully cooperate in addressing the situation in Rakhine state with all the relevant United Nations and international bodies, including the Human Rights Council's independent international fact-finding mission.

Poland also emphasizes the importance of establishing conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary, dignified and sustainable return of displaced persons to Rakhine state and their reintegration. We urge the Government to immediately ease restrictions on freedom of movement in order to facilitate access for all communities to employment opportunities, education, health care and other services. We also look forward to the implementation of the arrangement signed in November 2017 between Myanmar and Bangladesh on the return of displaced persons from Rakhine state, and the memorandum of understanding signed in June by Myanmar, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): I would like to thank Mr. Darusman for his briefing. We have been following the situation in Myanmar very closely since we joined the Council. We believe that so far the Council's constructive engagement has had a positive impact in terms of addressing the humanitarian situation in Rakhine state. We note the progress that has been made but also recognize the enormous challenges that still lie ahead.

The human rights situation in Myanmar is indeed a matter for serious concern and we understand that the relevant and appropriate United Nations bodies are handling the matter. The issue with respect to whether or how the Security Council should directly address human rights issues has been a matter of debate in the Council and there is no consensus among members on it, as we have clearly seen today. The situation in Myanmar is extremely complex and difficult, and a sustainable solution to the root causes of the problems that led to this humanitarian disaster must be found. In that context, we do not believe that our course of action will help to make progress in ongoing efforts where building mutual confidence and trust among those concerned is so critical. That is the main reason why we decided to abstain in the voting on the agenda item.

We believe that ensuring accountability through a transparent and independent verification mechanism is absolutely critical. In that regard, we recognize the efforts that the Government of Myanmar is making and underscore the importance of speeding them up in order to ensure peace and reconciliation in the country. We would like to take this opportunity to appreciate the role of Special Envoy Christine Burgener, and we have seen the outcome of her third visit to Myanmar and the region, which enabled her to engage with various stakeholders. As she emphasized during her visit, the issues of accountability and inclusive dialogue are indeed important pillars for national reconciliation. We could not agree more with her on the need for credible and reliable fact-finding as a first step towards accountability. We believe the Council should continue to support her important efforts.

We are also pleased to note the recent bilateral and regional engagement aimed at repatriating refugees and addressing the complex issue of Rakhine state. In that context, the three-point consensus reached between China, Myanmar and Bangladesh during the informal meeting held on the sidelines of the General Assembly is indeed encouraging. We look forward to the outcome of the third joint working group meeting, to be held on 29 October in Dhaka. We hope it will help in making

further progress with regard to the process of voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation.

The enormous burden that Bangladesh has taken on in providing safety and humanitarian assistance to refugees is indeed commendable. However, the magnitude and scale of the humanitarian situation means that Bangladesh requires further financial and logistical support. We therefore hope that bilateral and multilateral partners will scale up their support to the country.

Finally, without a united Security Council there can be no meaningful progress in support for the efforts to find a sustainable solution to the situation in Myanmar. We hope we will be able to restore that unity of purpose despite our divergent views.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At our last meeting on this subject, on 28 August (see S/PV.8333), together with other members of the Council, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea again reaffirmed its profound concern for the hundreds of thousands of Rohingya who, for fear of violence and atrocities, have been forced to flee their homelands and property in Myanmar to Bangladesh.

We applaud the solidarity of the Government and the people of Bangladesh who, with the support of the United Nations, its partners and non-governmental organizations, continue to provide security, accommodation, assistance and humanitarian aid to an enormous number of refugees. We hope that this major humanitarian effort can continue while the international community works together with Myanmar and Bangladesh to ensure the entire population's dignified and sustainable return to their homeland.

Despite the well-known difficulties surrounding this issue, our delegation certainly appreciates the work that has been carried out by the United Nations this year. Among other things, it includes the important visit by members of the Council in the second quarter of this year and the June visit of the Secretary-General, in which he was joined, significantly, by the President of the World Bank. We also highlight the Secretary-General's April appointment of his Special Envoy on Myanmar, who has made several trips to explore and familiarize herself with the area since then. Nor should we forget the direct and continued support supplied by the various agencies of the United Nations system on the ground.

During those visits, the delegations were able to confirm the deplorable situation of the displaced Rohingya in the settlements in Cox's Bazar, where hearings and meetings were also arranged with the local authorities in Myanmar and Bangladesh, with whom they had important exchanges with a view to finding a solution to the conflict. It will be impossible to ensure a dignified and prosperous future for young refugees with the very limited education prospects and ways to earn a living available to them, so if they remain there a long time an entire generation of a people will be condemned to poverty. The international community and Myanmar must understand that, but they must also respect the generous hospitality of Bangladesh, and that obliges us to redouble our efforts to advance the process of ensuring the return of the Rohingya. We hope that the Government of Myanmar has made progress with the initiatives it laid out in a letter submitted to the Council on 20 July through its representative in New York (S/2018/726) on humanitarian access, accountability for human rights abuses and the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, which were also the main areas identified by the Council.

We welcome the fact that since the office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar became operational, Myanmar and Bangladesh have been receiving regular working visits from Ms. Burgener and having in-depth exchanges with her on the issue of Rakhine. We must all support her work and give her time for a more thorough and appropriate investigation that will better facilitate her dialogue with local Governments.

We also welcome the ministerial meeting held in August between Myanmar and Bangladesh, at which they discussed the implementation of the bilateral repatriation agreement and reached consensus on issues such as forms of verification, displaced persons in the border area and the establishment of a direct line of communication between their Ministers. We encourage the parties to continue working together constructively. We also stress the importance of the joint working group meetings held in recent months between Myanmar and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme, which in our view help to reinforce their respective commitments. The meetings should be frequent, productive and exemplary in order to build more trust and pursue their shared goal, the creation of

a safe sociopolitical environment that can guarantee the refugees' return to their homes.

Before concluding, Equatorial Guinea urges all members of the Council and the international community to support all initiatives based on peaceful negotiations and the encouragement of contacts as the only way to reach a sustainable and lasting solution to this thorny situation. Lastly, we want to express our sincere gratitude to the United Nations and all its agencies on the ground, to Bangladesh and to all international actors providing assistance of any kind to the Rohingya refugees or working to facilitate their return. We also commend the People's Republic of China for its exemplary efforts as a liaison between the various parties concerned and encourage it to continue in order to ensure that Myanmar collaborates effectively with Bangladesh for the return of the Rohingya to their homes.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Marzuki Darusman, Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar established by the Human Rights Council, for his briefing, which is crucial to the work of the Security Council. Peru supported convening this meeting, considering, among other things, that since the Council's visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh in April, which we had the honour of leading together with the United Kingdom and Kuwait, the responses aimed at resolving the grave humanitarian crisis there are still insufficient. That is why we believe that the Council should continue to pay due attention to the plight of the Rohingya refugees, with a view to bringing about their voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation, as well as to promoting justice, accountability and reconciliation in order to build sustainable peace in Myanmar.

We would like to reiterate our appreciation to Bangladesh for its solidarity in taking in more than 1 million refugees, and to stress the importance of the international community's support in addressing the refugees' critical humanitarian situation, especially in the light of the impact of the recent monsoon. We also stress the role of regional and subregional organizations, particularly in preventing and responding to emerging conflicts. In that regard, we welcome the involvement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in addressing and contributing to a solution to the situation in Myanmar.

We have high hopes for the ongoing technical meetings held by the joint working groups established by Myanmar and Bangladesh, as well as the efforts of the Burmese authorities to advance the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme. We also underline the recent visit of the Special Envoy and in that context, we stress the urgent need for all the current efforts and developments to produce concrete results on the ground with a view to enabling the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Addressing the root causes of the crisis by fully implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State is urgent, although we recognize that these are complex tasks within the framework of a delicate national process of peace, reconciliation and democratization. While we acknowledge the significant effort involved in establishing an independent investigative commission, we must point out that in order to fully understand this tragedy, its jurisdiction cannot be restricted to events prior to 25 August 2017. In that connection, we take careful note of the conclusions of the report of the fact-finding mission (A/HRC/39/64), in which, after considering the violence that occurred after 25 August 2017 and its causes, it finds reasonable evidence for the commission of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Given the gravity of the situation, we take note of the decision of the International Criminal Court to affirm its jurisdiction over the crime of the forced deportation of the Rohingya people. We look forward to the results of the preliminary examination by the Office of the Prosecutor of the Court. We also stress the importance of Human Rights Council resolution 39/2, which approved the establishment of a new independent mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of violations of international law. We believe that this is an urgent task that requires cooperation with the private sector, particularly in the area of information and communication technology, and that it should also serve to develop strategies aimed at preventing the dissemination of distorted information and narratives of hatred and discrimination.

In conclusion, I would like to stress how important it is that the Council continue to focus on this situation. It can count on my delegation's full support in that regard.

Mr. Adom (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank Mr. Marzuki Darusman, Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, for his very thorough and informative briefing.

Barely 10 years ago, my country and other countries in the West African subregion were emerging from very painful internal conflict. Mr. Darusman's briefing brings back those images of hordes of ragged and desperate people fleeing attacks, trudging over rutted roads under a blazing tropical sun. When Côte d'Ivoire emerged from that internal conflict, thanks to the help of the international community, the people of Côte d'Ivoire said never again. And as our country decided to align its ideas with its actions, we have enshrined as a cornerstone of our Constitution the right to life as a cardinal principle and value. What we want for the Ivorian people is also what we want for the other peoples of the world. That is why the humanitarian situation of the displaced and refugee Rohingya people and the human rights situation in Rakhine state continue to challenge the conscience of humankind and our humanity. That is why we joined others in calling for this meeting.

Côte d'Ivoire does not claim to have a monopoly of the heart, to paraphrase a great President of a great friendly country, whom I esteem. However, it is clear that, in spite of the efforts made, enormous challenges remain, particularly in relation to the delivery humanitarian aid and the return of Rohingya refugees. That is why my statement will focus essentially on the humanitarian aspect.

Côte d'Ivoire commends the commitment of the Government of Myanmar to cooperating with the United Nations — a commitment embodied by the signing on 6 June of the tripartite memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Côte d'Ivoire urges the Myanmar authorities to redouble their efforts to implement that agreement by facilitating the access of United Nations agencies and specialized bodies to populations in need in order to provide them with access to humanitarian aid and assistance.

With regard to the issue of human rights, my delegation takes note of the findings of the Human Rights Council independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar. Côte d'Ivoire reaffirms its commitment to respecting and protecting human rights. We underscore the obligation of the international community to bring the perpetrators of human rights violations before the appropriate courts. In that regard, we support the efforts of the Human Rights Council to implement the findings of the fact-finding mission, including through the establishment of an independent mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse the evidence of the most serious crimes and violations of international law in Myanmar.

The solution to the current crisis in Myanmar must be viewed as part of a comprehensive approach that addresses, inter alia, the important issue of the safe and dignified return of Rohingya refugees. Côte d'Ivoire remains convinced that lasting peace in Myanmar must be based on the search for consensual solutions that take into account the concerns of all parties. To that end, we wish to see the international community focus its efforts on three main areas: the implementation of the memorandum of understanding between Myanmar, UNHCR and UNDP; the establishment of a process to fight impunity, in support of the work of the ongoing national commission of inquiry; and the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

My delegation reiterates its support for Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, and encourages the Government of that friendly country to continue to cooperate with her. My country — which, in the early 1990s, provided asylum to and facilitated the integration of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries — recognizes the immense efforts and sacrifices entailed in the opening of national borders to people in distress. That is why we wish to express our sincere gratitude to the authorities and the friendly people of Bangladesh for their hospitality and assistance to the Rohingya refugees.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire urges the international community to continue and increase its assistance to refugees by making an adequate financial contribution to the United Nations joint response plan.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): The situation in Myanmar and that of the Rohingya refugees remain among the most critical problems of concern for the international community. The world is today witnessing one of the most serious catastrophes and violations in the humanitarian space, with the displacement of more than

700,000 Rohingya refugees who have fled to Bangladesh since August last year. At the same time, on procedural grounds, the invitation to the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar — mandated by the Human Rights Council, which is a subsidiary body of the General Assembly — to brief the Council is beyond its mandate. My delegation therefore abstained during the procedural voting. On the other hand, we acknowledge the update by Chairperson Darusman and we thank him.

My country has always stood for an early and comprehensive solution to this humanitarian crisis, with the direct participation of Myanmar, Bangladesh and the entire international community. That stance remains unchanged even today. We note the arrangements made by the Government of Myanmar for the repatriation and resettlement of the Rohingya refugees, as well as its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Ms. Burgener. We welcome her third visit to Myanmar from 10 to 20 October, which has led to further progress in that regard.

With that in mind, my delegation also expresses grave concern about the results of the fact-finding mission investigation and condemns the atrocities committed in Rakhine. The reported flagrant, massive and systematic violations of human rights have been shocking, including discrimination on ethnic and religious grounds, with ongoing large-scale deportation and systematic oppression that are still prevalent. We are particularly concerned that the report comes to the conclusion that,

> "The extreme vulnerability of the Rohingya is a consequence of State policies and practices implemented over decades" (*A/HRC/39/64, para. 20*).

It is obvious that the full disclosure of the atrocities and taking action against those responsible will be a necessary prerequisite to instil confidence in the refugees that they can return home. Likewise, under the current circumstances, the return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to their homes in Rakhine state will not be possible unless the authorities of Myanmar expedite the process of creating the necessary conditions and providing full security assurances, as well as access to education, employment, health care and stable, long-term sources of livelihoods.

We strongly believe that it is only by addressing the root causes — namely, the issues of citizenship and restoring the rights and freedoms of the Rohingya Muslims — that this complex and long-standing crisis can see a dignified and durable solution. We expect the Government of Myanmar to continue to adopt confidence-building measures and implement all the practical measures recommended by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. For example, the freedom of movement of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar should be ensured immediately by the Government of Myanmar in order to clearly demonstrate its own sincerity.

More than 1 million Rohingya Muslims — the vast majority being women and children — have to remain in extremely difficult conditions in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Kazakhstan commends the efforts of the Government of Bangladesh in helping such an unprecedented magnitude of refugees and providing them with shelter, medical care, food and other forms of assistance. At the same time, we still need an enormous amount of additional funds, as well as all forms of in-kind assistance. We therefore appeal to all Member States, international organizations and other actors to continue providing full support to Bangladesh. At the same time, Kazakhstan understands that establishing intercommunal trust is a long-term and challenging process that will demand the active participation of all stakeholders.

However, the main responsibility for resolving the problem lies with the Union of Myanmar itself. We are particularly encouraged by the results of an informal meeting between China, Myanmar and Bangladesh on the margins of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. We believe that this third meeting of the joint working group, to be held on 29 and 30 October in Dhaka, will contribute to resolving the issue of displaced persons in a friendly and expeditious manner. In our view, the engagement of the Asian troika has considerable potential to contribute to the resolution of the current crisis.

Finally, we believe that the Security Council should contribute positively to settling the crisis and avoid needless polarization. My delegation is committed to supporting the multilateral actions aimed at ensuring peace and security for the Rohingya refugees and the people of Myanmar, and we expect the Government to make every effort to that end.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russia) (*spoke in Russian*): Today, before our very eyes, the Security Council forfeited consensus on yet another extremely important topic in the work of our Organization, resulting from an unconstructive, irresponsible tactic by a number of States designed to force us to hold a meeting to discuss the report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar established by the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/39/64). As we already noted in our statement on the reasons for the procedural vote, we see absolutely no added value in a briefing to the Security Council on the subject.

We have been made to discuss a very strange report, whose legitimacy has given rise to serious doubts. It has already been widely criticized within the Human Rights Council by many delegations, including ours, which testifies to its confrontational nature and which in itself devalues any discussion of the document that has been dumped on the Security Council. We are all aware that Myanmar is not cooperating with the fact-finding mission, and its representatives have never visited the country. It is therefore hardly possible to consider evidence collected outside the country concerned to be objective or exhaustive. That also fully applies to the so-called findings and conclusions based on that evidence.

Those who pushed for today's discussion of the report in the Security Council are doing all they can to reduce the significance of the Myanmar authorities' establishment on 30 July of an independent commission of inquiry, whose leaders and staff include reputable foreign representatives. Rather than blackmailing and intimidating Naypyidaw, it would be helpful to give the commission our whole-hearted multilateral support. After today's meeting, no one should be left with any illusions about the fact that its instigators have absolutely no interest in resolving the problems of the Rohingya. They are merely an excuse for putting shameless pressure on the authorities of a sovereign State and forcing it to do what its former colonizer and its allies want. The logical next step in that direction would be pressure for anti-Myanmar sanctions and corresponding Security Council resolutions, a course of action that we categorically refuse to support.

I say that because it is hard to avoid noticing that Naypyidaw is trying to solve the refugee problem. Since the Security Council's visit to Myanmar at the end of April and beginning of May, we have seen a number of positive changes. The Myanmar leadership is working systematically to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State with a view to achieving a comprehensive settlement of the crisis, and 81 of the 88 recommendations have been implemented so far. The authorities have repeatedly confirmed at the official level their willingness to ensure the gradual return of all the displaced, including from Bangladesh. To date, Myanmar has verified the identity of more than 8,000 refugees. The steps taken to establish the infrastructure in Rakhine state needed for receiving and resettling returnees deserve high praise.Another positive example is the close cooperation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme with the Government of Myanmar on implementing the tripartite memorandum of understanding signed on 6 June. We support the work of Christine Schraner Burgener, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, who has already visited the country three times, most recently from 10 to 20 October, and we note the positive response of the Myanmar authorities to her proposal for opening an office in Naypyidaw.

For our part, we have consistently supported a balanced and non-confrontational approach in discussing the situation in Myanmar and finding ways to normalize the humanitarian situation in Rakhine, including resolving the issue of the Rohingya. We should keep in mind that the underlying problems in Rakhine are multifaceted and complex, and can be resolved only through peaceful political and diplomatic efforts establishing a dialogue between the authorities in Naypyidaw and Dhaka and representatives of all ethnic and religious groups. The agreed legal basis for negotiations between Myanmar and Bangladesh and the functioning coordination mechanisms will make it possible to take practical steps in that direction. The tactic of postponing the start of the repatriation process, which is increasingly being used by outside forces to put additional pressure on Myanmar, is counterproductive. At this stage, we believe that the priority is ensuring international cooperation with a view to tackling the worst humanitarian consequences of the crisis. We believe it is essential to provide assistance to both Bangladesh and Myanmar, and that it is also the role of the international community to help Naypyidaw and Dhaka implement their existing agreements.

We see the Rakhine issue as part of a wider context of the broad challenges and tasks facing the democratically elected leadership in Myanmar. We do

not support attempts to saddle Naypyidaw or specific groups in Myanmar with the entire responsibility for resolving the crisis, while ignoring the need to combat terrorist groups, above all the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, whose attacks launched by that group did a great deal to provoke the situation in Rakhine state. Such actions only make the prospects for a solid inter-ethnic peace in Myanmar and for its effective cooperation with the international community more distant. We believe that assistance to the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh in resolving the situation related to Rakhine state should be provided in a spirit of equality and mutual respect. Unfortunately, today's meeting contributes absolutely nothing to that.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China regrets the fact that the Security Council heard a briefing today from the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar established by the Human Rights Council. Such practices jeopardize the unity of the Council and are not conducive to ensuring that its members cooperate to jointly solve the issue of Rakhine state.

Good progress has recently been made in resolving the issue of Rakhine state through the joint efforts of the country concerned, other countries in the region and United Nations agencies. In mid-September, the first joint mission of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme visited 23 villages in Rakhine state, while in mid-October a second joint mission visited a further 26 villages. The Myanmar Government has promised to grant the joint mission full access to Rakhine state's entire territory and to actively implement the tripartite memorandum of understanding. The recommendations made by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State in its report are being implemented. Myanmar's independent commission of inquiry on Rakhine state recently began work and held a meeting. In consultations with Bangladesh, the commission visited Kasba, in Bangladesh, to conduct an investigation with a view to establishing accountability for the human rights violations committed in Rakhine state after the attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in October 2016 and August 2017.

In mid-October, Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, visited Myanmar once again. She held in-depth discussions with Myanmar leaders and officials, and visited Maungdaw and Buthidaung to get first-hand information on the situation in Rakhine state. The Myanmar and Bangladesh joint working group will hold its third meeting by the end of the month. Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, indicated recently that based on Bangladesh's list of 8,000 people and the list provided by Myanmar, a first group of refugees will soon be repatriated. The international community should note and fully acknowledge that active progress. The Government and the people of Bangladesh have been providing significant humanitarian support for the displaced people in Bangladesh despite the difficulties involved. They are working hard to improve their living conditions and make the necessary arrangements to help them respond to natural events such as hurricanes and the rainy season. China greatly appreciates Bangladesh's outstanding efforts.

Myanmar and Bangladesh are both friends and neighbours of China. Since the beginning of the Rakhine state incidents, China has been actively engaged in diplomatic efforts to promote dialogue and consultations between the two countries so as to resolve the issue. China proposed the concept of a three-stage solution to the Rakhine state issue and has encouraged the parties to agree on a number of important issues. On 27 September, following the first informal tripartite meeting in late June between China, Myanmar and Bangladesh, Mr. Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, held another informal tripartite meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York with Mr. Ali and Mr. U Kyaw Tint Swe, Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor of Myanmar, which was also attended by the Secretary-General and Ms. Burgener, his Special Envoy on Myanmar. The meeting's friendly, frank and constructive atmosphere resulted in three important points of consensus.

First, Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed to properly resolve the issue of Rakhine state through friendly consultations. Secondly, Bangladesh indicated that it was ready to repatriate the first group of people who had fled the turmoil. Myanmar also indicated that it was well prepared to receive those ready to be repatriated. Thirdly, both countries agreed to convene a joint working group meeting as soon as possible to establish a road map and timetable for the repatriation, so that work on it can begin without delay. We are therefore pleased to note that the consensus I mentioned is being actively implemented.

China is deeply concerned about the displaced people in Bangladesh and has provided humanitarian assistance to both countries concerned. On the same basis as its previous assistance, China recently pledged to donate 1,000 temporary shelters to local people to improve their living conditions and resettle the repatriated, and has also provided Bangladesh with ¥20 million in food assistance. We remain committed to seeking a solution to the Rakhine state issue.

The Rahkine state issue has a complex historical, ethnic and religious background. It is essentially an issue between Myanmar and Bangladesh, and resolving it will require relentless long-term effort. The international community should respect Myanmar's sovereignty and territorial integrity, appreciate its hard-won positive progress, fully understand the difficulties and challenges it is dealing with and make meaningful efforts to help resolve the issue. The immediate task is ensuring the early launch of the repatriation process for those who fled Myanmar for Bangladesh. The international community should encourage both countries to intensify their dialogue and ensure that the first group is successfully repatriated as soon as possible so that they can return to their homes.

The issues of greatest concern to everyone in the repatriation process, which are freedom of movement, citizenship and accountability, should be gradually and appropriately resolved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme should intensify their consultations with the Myanmar Government and work for the effective implementation of the tripartite memorandum of understanding. The Security Council should continue to support the Special Envoy, who is seeking dialogue and consultations aimed at helping the Myanmar Government resolve the issue. Development is the fundamental pathway to a lasting a solution to the Rakhine state issue. The international community should devote more attention to helping local authorities and residents eradicate poverty, achieve sustainable development, improve their livelihoods and social and economic conditions, and foster social stability and harmonious coexistence among the people.

Last but not least, the international community is closely following the human rights situation and the issue of accountability in Rakhine state. The Myanmar Government is committed to bringing to justice the perpetrators of human rights violations on a basis of solid evidence. It has established an independent commission of inquiry on Rakhine state, which has extensive international participation and has promised to submit a report within a year. The international community should respect Myanmar's sovereignty and encourage the commission to work independently, establish the truth and hold the perpetrators of human rights violations accountable.

With regard to the report of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar (A/HRC/39/64), the mission did not enter in Myanmar at all. Its results are based on biased, incomplete information. They are neither objective nor impartial, and therefore not credible. Its conclusions, suggestions and recommendations constitute wilful interference in Myanmar's internal affairs and are an affront to its sovereignty. The fact-finding mission is not a judge. Such practices are unhelpful to resolving the issue in Rakhine state and can only jeopardize the possibility of internal reconciliation and democratic transition in Myanmar, escalate tensions in Rakhine state and undermine the authority and credibility of the United Nations.

Human rights are a common cause of the international community and one of the three pillars of the United Nations. China has consistently advocated for dialogue on human rights issues, based on equality and mutual respect. That is the right way to promote the cause of human rights for humankind. China stands ready to work with the international community to seek dialogue and consultations, uphold justice and impartiality, work to find a solution and continue to play a constructive role in resolving the issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia reiterates its deep concern about the acts of violence that occurred in Rakhine state in August 2017 and their aftermath, which led to the displacement of approximately 900,000 people to Bangladesh, where they are living in difficult conditions. That violence cannot go unpunished. Those deeds must be investigated, and the people responsible for them identified and brought to justice to answer for them in the appropriate courts. The work of the independent commission of inquiry on Rakhine state established at the end of July is key to achieving that goal. To that end, it is essential that all the relevant agencies and institutions cooperate with the commission's

investigations and provide all the information needed to ensure that the perpetrators do not continue to enjoy impunity. We want to emphasize in that regard that since its establishment, the commission has held three meetings with officials at various levels of Government and members of the populations affected.

We would like to highlight the efforts of regional actors to bring the parties together and promote dialogue between them, such as the meeting held on 27 September with the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar and Bangladesh at the initiative of China's Minister for Foreign Affairs, which the Secretary-General attended. An agreement was reached at that meeting to resolve the issue through amicable consultations among the parties, coordinate the repatriation of a first group of displaced persons and hold a joint meeting to develop a road map and timetable to achieve that goal. We also want to point to the meeting in Beijing on 29 June between the Foreign Ministers of Myanmar and Bangladesh, also initiated by China's Minister for Foreign Affairs, during which the basic principles for four points for resolving the situation of the Rohingya refugees were agreed on — finding a way to stop the violence, beginning the work of repatriation, implementing projects and sustainable development programmes to the benefit of both parties and thereby strengthening relations of trust and cooperation between the Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar. It is that type of positive action that should be at the forefront of promoting the resolution of the situation in Myanmar.

On the other hand, it is also important to strengthen the cooperation and coordination work for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees that the Government of Myanmar is developing together with the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed on 6 June. As a result of its implementation, 23 villages were evaluated in July and 26 additional villages are currently being evaluated. In addition, the international community should provide all possible support to the Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar for the implementation of the framework for a dignified, safe, voluntary and transparent return of the refugees to their places of origin and encourage the fulfilment of the remaining tasks. In that regard, we have taken note of the visit to Myanmar of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, which concluded a few days ago.

Finally, as all the other delegations have done, my delegation acknowledges and commends the efforts that the Government of Bangladesh has made over the past year with regard to the refugees in its country. In that regard, it is imperative that the international community and the United Nations do everything possible to support host communities in Bangladesh and ensure that they have access to short-, medium- and long-term development incentives.

I shall make a brief reference to what we heard at the end of the statement made by the representative of the United States. I will be very brief so as not to distract the Council's attention from the subject that brings us together today. I would like to point out that I agree with the Permanent Representative of the United States that there are ways of doing things at the United Nations. There are ways to have relations of cooperation and mutual respect among Member State. And there is also the other way — to use and instrumentalize the United Nations and its facilities for political purposes, or to use and instrumentalize the issue of human rights with a double standard and for political purposes. My delegation, in its national capacity, is not going to ask anyone for permission on how to behave or act. On the other hand, we insist that United Nations facilities not be used for political purposes.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Suan (Myanmar): Today, 24 October, marks the seventy-third anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. In Myanmar we celebrate United Nations Day every year with a special ceremony and public activities to promote awareness of the work of the United Nations. This is a day to celebrate, a day to cherish, a day to remember the past and a day to renew our noble commitment to building peace, development and human rights in the world, the responsibilities the founding fathers of the Organization entrusted upon us.

Sadly, though, we are gathering here in the Chamber in defiance of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations — that of our own Organization — against the standing rules and procedures of the Council and against all logic and fairness of human conscience. We are witnessing the core erosion of the moral and institutional integrity of the United Nations as a result of the blatant attempt by some members of the Council to hijack the human rights

issue for their political purposes. My delegation has joined other Council members in our strong objection to this injustice and abuse of the established practice of the Security Council.

When the fact-finding mission on Myanmar was established by the Human Rights Council, in March 2017, we objected to the mission because of our serious concerns, particularly about the advisability of its establishment and the mandate itself. The Human Rights Council resolution mandated the mission

> "to establish the facts and circumstances of the alleged recent human rights violations by military and security forces, and abuses, in Myanmar, in particular in Rakhine State ... with a view to ensuring full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims" (*Human Rights Council resolution 34/22, para. 11*)

The mandate was very clear. The mission has already designated who should be perpetrators and who should be victims. From its genesis, the establishment of the fact-finding mission has been flawed, biased and politically motivated, with hidden agendas. We are also concerned that the release of its report (A/HRC/39/64), which is based on narratives and not on hard evidence, will serve only to further inflame tensions and potentially hinder the Government's effort to create much-needed social cohesion in Rakhine state. The one-sided report of the mission has confirmed our concerns.

We also raised previously in the Chamber, on 28 August (see S/PV.8333), our doubt — or our concern — about the sincerity of the mission. Although the mission was mandated to submit its report to the Human Rights Council on 18 September, it released, well ahead and in haste, the unedited version of the report on 27 August, just one day ahead of the Security Council's public debate on the situation in Myanmar. The action called for our legitimate concerns about the objectivity, impartiality and credibility of the mission. The methodology of its investigation is also flawed, as the report was prepared from results of interviews of selected groups of displaced persons in Cox's Bazar and information gathered from some non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs and human rights groups who had already set their predetermined agenda on the issue. Therefore, the mission's report did not shed new light on the problem but was found to be identical with the reports of certain human rights groups with no accountability for their work at all.

We have repeatedly explained the fact that the current humanitarian crisis in Rakhine state was ignited by the unprovoked and premeditated attacks against 30 police outposts and a military battalion headquarters by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terrorist group in August 2017 and, previously, in October 2016. The ARSA terrorists had massacred security personnel and hundreds of innocent civilians, including 100 Hindu villagers, other ethnic minorities and even pro-Government Muslims. The atrocities perpetrated by ARSA have made thousands of innocent ethnic people flee their villages to the other parts of Rakhine state. Likewise, it created a massive exodus of Muslims to the neighbouring country. It is crucial to bear in mind that the present crisis did not affect only the Muslim community. When we talk about human rights, we should look at the human rights of both communities.

However, we are dismayed by the fact that the fact-finding mission has deliberately and glaringly discounted ARSA terrorist atrocities, which could even be interpreted by many as justifying or condoning the acts of Muslim extremist terrorists. In its report, the fact-finding mission took great courage to reluctantly and half-heartedly mention the atrocities committed by ARSA terrorists. It lists a few ARSA human rights violations, including "the killing of up to 100 Hindu men and women from Kha Maung Seik" (*A/HRC/39/64, para. 54*). It continues:

> "[t]he mission's primary source information on the latter incident" — that is, the killing of Hindus — "corroborates the killing, but is inconclusive as to the perpetrator. Other militant or criminal groups were also active in the region and may also have been responsible for abuses." (*ibid.*)

Amazing. I am just bringing the naked truth of the report to the attention of the members of the Council.

Much has been talked about accountability. As the Council is well aware, the Government of Myanmar has established an independent commission of inquiry, led by Ambassador Rosario Manalo. The commission will investigate allegations of human rights violations and related issues following the terrorist attacks of 9 October 2016 and 25 August 2017 by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army in Rakhine state with a view to seeking accountability and reconciliation. The commission will conduct its mandate in accordance

with the principles of independence, impartiality and objectivity, and will submit its report within a year. We are willing and able to take on the issue of accountability for any alleged human rights violation where there is sufficient evidence. We need to give time and space to the independent commission of inquiry.

Mr. Darusman has said that Myanmar has taken no action on alleged violation of human rights. In fact, legal actions have been taken against military and police officers and civilians who were found to be in breach of standard operating procedures and rules of engagement following the Inn Din incident. In addition, other administrative actions have also been taken against high-ranking senior officers of Tatmadaw who were responsible for overseeing security operations in Rakhine.

My delegation categorically rejects the inference of "genocidal intent" with respect to the legitimate counter-terrorist actions taken by the security forces in Rakhine. The conclusion is made based on unverified circumstantial evidence and has no sound legal proof. The Government of Myanmar has resolutely rejected the 6 September ruling of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in connection with Rakhine state. Our position is clear — Myanmar is not a party to the Rome Statute and the Court has no jurisdiction whatsoever over Myanmar. The ICC decision was made on dubious legal grounds and applied to a situation where domestic remedies have not yet been exhausted. Therefore, I want to make it very clear that we will never accept any call for the referral of Myanmar to the ICC.

As I stated earlier, we have demonstrated our willingness and ability to address the accountability issue. Putting accountability above all else, without regard to other positive developments, will result only in untoward consequences. Unilateral coercive measures taken without regard to the objective situation in Myanmar and the imposition of politically motivated external pressure will be detrimental to the existing good will and cooperation of the Myanmar Government with the international community.

The situation in Rakhine has in no way threatened international peace and security. The accusation is absurd and groundless. The report is full of prejudice and is totally unconstructive. In his United Nations Day message today, President Win Myint reminds us that,

> "The value of the United Nations will be decided by how the Organization and its Member States utilize instruments at their disposal to promote peace, stability and harmony, and to mitigate harm and enmity. Objectivity, impartiality, professionalism, respect for national sovereignty — these are some of the keys to the success of the United Nations mission."

I would like to remind Council members that Myanmar is still at a critical juncture of transition to fully functioning democracy. Mr. Darusman has said patience will not help Myanmar's democratization, but the opposite is true. It is not by revolution that we are building democracy. Our leader, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has chosen a peaceful path through national reconciliation and national consensus, which require tremendous patience and political wisdom. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, Ms. Christine Burgener, in her end-of-mission statement to Myanmar on 20 October, stressed the need for patience and more trust-building to advance the peace process towards a home-grown solution. We concur fully with the Special Envoy. Patience and trust-building are key to the success of our common efforts to find a viable and sustainable solution to the present humanitarian crisis and the whole issue of northern Rakhine. That is the way to lead us to realizing our ultimate national goal of building a truly democratic federal union.

Before I conclude, I would like to bring to the Council's attention an act of gross contempt of all ethics and civility on the premises of the United Nations. I am sorry to raise this issue, but yesterday pamphlets concerning my country — which I am holding — were distributed in Conference Room 1, where the Third Committee was holding its plenary session to hear an oral presentation by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Ms. Yanghee Lee, and the Chairperson of the fact-finding mission, Mr. Darusman.

This is not the work of a disgruntle dissident or a human rights activist who does not care about rule and regulations. This is the act of a Chairperson of an international fact-finding mission who was appointed and mandated by the Human Rights Council, one of the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly. We cannot fathom how such hypocrisy can have a place in this world body. This is a disgrace to the United Nations. These pamphlets are a total insult to a Member of the United Nations and its sitting leaders. It is a gross violation of the codes of conduct of United Nations

personnel. My Government has condemned this action in the strongest terms. Hate speech and provocation are now coming right into the United Nations conference rooms, where we should all work together for peace, harmony and tolerance.

Everyone has to be accountable for his or her actions. History will judge individuals based on what they have said and done in the Council Chamber and in the United Nations. The people of Myanmar — and no one else — will decide their destiny.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): We thank you, Mr. President, for giving us an opportunity to speak. We appreciate the efforts by nine Council members to organize this briefing by Mr. Marzuki Darusman, Chairperson of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar.

As far as Bangladesh is concerned, our overriding priority in the Rohingya humanitarian crisis is to ensure the voluntary and sustainable return of the forcibly displaced Rohingya to their ancestral homes in safety and dignity. Bangladesh can have no interest served by forestalling the repatriation and allowing the crisis to become protracted with a growing Rohingya population of 1.1 million. Accordingly, we have agreed to commence repatriation of the rather small number of individuals so far verified by the Myanmar authorities at the earliest opportunity. After all, we painstakingly negotiated every element in the bilateral arrangements concluded between our two Governments, and we would wish to see our Myanmar counterparts adhere to those provisions.

We have consistently maintained that as long as the forcibly displaced Rohingya voluntarily opted for return to Rakhine state and gained confidence about an environment conducive to their return, Bangladesh would put in place all possible arrangements to facilitate that process. At the ministerial meeting held last month among China, Bangladesh and Myanmar in the presence of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy on Myanmar, our delegation made our position on that abundantly clear.

We recall that we proactively enlisted the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for facilitating the verification process for return, and we welcomed reports on Myanmar's memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme and UNHCR to gather an objective assessment of the situation on the ground in Rakhine state. We have also stressed that dismantling the remaining camps for internally displaced persons in Rakhine state and allowing those stranded along the border between our two countries to return without fear of reprisal could be critical confidence-building measures.

Along these lines, our Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, presented a three-point recommendation in the margins of the General Assembly's general debate last month. First, Myanmar must abolish discriminatory laws, policies and practices against Rohingyas and address the root causes of forced displacement in a genuine and timely manner. Secondly, Myanmar must create a conducive environment by building trust and guaranteeing protection, rights and a pathway to citizenship for all Rohingyas. If needed, it should create a safe zone inside Myanmar to protect all civilians. Thirdly, it must prevent atrocity crimes against Rohingyas in Myanmar by ensuring accountability and justice, particularly in light of the recommendations of the independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar of the Human Rights Council. This, we believe, constitutes the minimum requirement for creating a situation that can be considered favourable to the Rohingyas' sustainable return to Myanmar, and accountability remains an integral part of it.

The evidence-based information and thorough contextual analysis provided by the fact-finding mission report (A/HRC/39/64) have validated what we had logically assumed from the first-hand accounts we had heard from the forcibly displaced Rohingya in Bangladesh. Our highest political leadership had no doubt that the violence and persecution suffered by the Rohingya were tantamount to the gravest crimes under international law. Our Prime Minister spoke with full responsibility when she termed the crimes as genocide, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing in her addresses to the General Assembly at its seventy-second (see A/72/PV.14) and seventy-third sessions (see A/73/PV.11).

The fact-finding mission has done an invaluable service to history and humanikind by furnishing its accounts in meticulous detail and by providing substantive reasoning for its conclusions. Considering the report's reliance on multiple sources and credible evidence, we find its conclusion to be compelling and

unambiguous — the crimes against the Rohingya in Rakhine State were committed by Myanmar security forces with "genocidal intent", while war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States.

The question of accountability is therefore gaining precedent. The perpetrators have been identified among all those involved, including certain non-State actors. It is critical that they all be held accountable for the crimes they committed against innocent civilians. The Rohingya have long been dehumanized by the Myanmar authorities, but not to the extent that the international community should absolve itself of its responsibility to seek justice for them. The resounding plea of the Chairperson of the fact-finding mission should continue to echo beyond the four walls of this Chamber.

Having said that, we believe that it is the primary responsibility of the State concerned to ensure justice for such atrocity crimes. The State of Myanmar has made repeated commitments to this effect and commissioned certain mechanisms that eroded the international community's confidence in any credible domestic efforts to secure accountability. The current commission of inquiry is expected to present its finding in a year's time, even as it provides modest assurance to the Rohingya living in a climate of impunity for near perpetuity.

Despite all prognoses otherwise, we will wait for an independent and impartial judicial process to emerge in Myanmar. We would consider this to be a critical building block for democratic consolidation and intercommunal reconciliation in Myanmar. The fact-find mission's report has offered a mirror to Myanmar society for the purposes of introspection and mending the fractures running through its fragile democratic polity. An honest reckoning with the report should promote further cohesion within society, provided there is sufficient political will to make that happen.

The Human Rights Council has acted appositely on the fact-find mission report, and decided on its second iteration, while mandating the establishment of an ongoing investigation mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Myanmar since 2011. Any criminal justice mechanism, be it national, regional or international, would have access to an authoritative and comprehensive body of evidence for exercising its jurisdiction. In case of repeated obstruction to justice at the domestic level, the international community may have to consider good practices from comparable situations and other possible means to pave the pathway to accountability.

In the face of such glaring evidence of crimes as presented by the fact-finding mission, the Security Council has yet another historic responsibility before it to do the right thing. In order to pre-empt the possible recurrence of such crimes in Myanmar and elsewhere, the Security Council should, as a first step, give due consideration to the possibility of adopting a resolution. It would be an affront to the victims to relegate the action on the fact-find mission report solely to the General Assembly.

Considering the trauma borne by countless Rohingya men, women and children, the international community should seriously consider setting up a trust fund for victims, pending a judicial decision on their reparation or compensation. As a State party to the Rome Statute, Bangladesh would cooperate with the International Criminal Court in pursuance of its jurisdiction on the forced deportation of the Rohingya from Myanmar's Rakhine state, including the possible denial of their right to return. We shall also continue to reach out our hands to our neighbours in Myanmar in our shared quest for a sustainable future for our peoples in rights and dignity.

The Council's decision today to hear the briefing by the fact-find mission Chairperson has reinforced yet again this Chamber's standing as the world's last resort for upholding the causes of humanity and justice. We reiterate our call on the Council to act as the custodian of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis until the time a durable solution is reached.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.